MANTLE OF THE EAST

EDMUND CANDLER

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The Mantle of the East

THE AUTHOR.

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BY

EDMUND CANDLER

AUTHOR OF
'THE UNVEILING OF LHASA,' 'A VAGABOND IN ASIA'

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TO

ALBERT KINROSS.

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PREFACE.

Is an introduction or an apology necessary for a book of travel? For my own part I feel that so long as my reminiscences are

"Stained with the variation of each soil"

I shall be as pleased with them as with a pair of old shooting-boots, the nails of which, hammered in by some sturdy peasant of the Oberland whose door opens into meadows lush with globe-flower and campanula, have been worn away in the wildernesses of the back of beyond, the insteps purple with the indurated mud of mangrove swamps, the toes cracked with the attrition of the desert sand, the gaping seams and sutures shot with Himalayan mica, and the uppers charactered over from sole to ankle with the sharp camel-thorn and the gorse of Devonshire moors.

The weakness of preserving shabby old boots and threadbare old jackets for the sake of intimate associations long after they have ceased to be decent is always laughed at, but it is regarded with a lenient eye by kindred spirits. Any meditative or curious rambler who has something of the chameleon in him, responsive to different atmospheres, will sympathise with this kind of sentimental thrift, and maybe listen patiently to the history of cracks and patches, dints of experience with which he is pleased to compare his own. The impulse that prompts books of desultory travel is of the same genus, a kind of economic instinct for storing sensation that would otherwise evaporate into the unsatisfying haze of half-remembered things.

The writing of these travel notes has been a labour of love, and I offer them without excuse, reserve, or hesitation, to the kind of man —and their name is legion — to whom one would say, confident of sympathy, "Look at those old boots. I should be sorry to lose them. I bought them in Darjeeling five years ago; I had them nailed in Kandersteg to climb the Blumlisalp; I have worn them

on the Phembu La and the waste of Babylon; I have bathed in them off the Sundarbans where the sting-rays are dangerous to bare feet, and I expect to leave the soles of them in an Irish snipe bog before another frost. But I'll have them patched up, even if I never wear them again."

My wanderings in the East have been spread over ten years, but what one gains in insight during a long stay one loses in the power of conveying. The most illuminating books on India have been written by people who pass through, seeing everything with fresh eyes, yet necessarily sacrificing something of just truth to the preconceived "I-felt-as-if-a-page-had-fluttered-out-of-the-Arabian-Nights" attitude. That is the visionary gleam of travel. We lose it when we learn that truth is not always beauty.

If the reader discovers a vein of enthusiasm for Eastern scenes and people all through these pages, it is because I have, as a rule, only written of what I have found congenial, of people who are more or less ennobled by courage or ideals for which they are ready to sacrifice much, and of places fascinating

for their beauty and remoteness, or, in the case of well-known cities such as Amritsar, Abu, and Benares, for some large tendency of human nature that finds particular expression there.

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The Mantle of the East.

A pilgrim going to the Ganges.

On any country road in the North-West you will meet Hindus carrying on their shoulder the *bhangi*, a bamboo pole balanced by two loads, often baskets of equal weight, hanging down to the waist. When the baskets hold a sea-green bottle, bulb-shaped, with a neck

and stopper, and packed round with straw, you may know the carrier is a pilgrim, and that he is going to or from the Ganges or Jumna, to Brinda Ban, perhaps, or Hardwar, or Muttra, or Benares, according to his faith, means, or devotion. His immediate concern is to collect holy water to take home and pour on Shiv's head, the Shiv who resides in his own village, or perhaps the Shiv of some more efficacious shrine, or it may be to pour on Krishna or Ganesh. Who is the recipient of the libation depends on the man's sect and the advice of his guru,—the main thing is the contact of the holy water with some god. Only, the more simple and unworldly the pilgrim, the more likely he is to admit that there are degrees of sanctity in the water, that a draught from Benares has more virtue than a draught from Mirzapur, and that whoever pours the libation must go to the river himself to draw it, and on foot, otherwise he will not acquire full merit. It is the fat and rational babu, always ready to parade his orthodoxy, who contends that all Ganges water is the same, since it proceeds from the same source, whether you take it from Hardwar or the Hooghly, and that a bathe from

any of the ghâts by the Calcutta Strand is as efficacious as a bathe from the Manikarnika Ghât at Benares. Yet even this rationalist, when he comes to die, will look towards Benares; for there is no corner of India quite outside its spiritual radius, nor any Hindu so evolved as to be entirely detached from its influence. Whoever takes the road there, though it be from the most remote village, will find others on the same quest. Like Lhasa and Mecca, Benares is the capital of a creed, and she emits rays that cast a spell on the faithful in every corner of Hindustan.

But nowadays most of the pilgrims go by train. When I took my ticket at Howrah, the great railway terminus in Calcutta, I had not long to wait before I found myself drawn into the current that is always flowing towards Káshi. A sick man on a litter was being hurried through the crowd with a great deal of bustle and circumstance. I saw him carried into a reserved first-class carriage and laid inertly on the seat. A crowd of excited relatives, servants, and parasites hurried in after him and began to press round him, fan him, peer into his face, and mark every pulse-

beat, as orientals do, apparently more anxious to show their concern than to give the invalid any chance of living. I learnt from a babu on the platform that the man was one Chandra Narayan, a notoriously evil-liver, and a consumer of cow's flesh, who hoped to reach Benares in the morning, and by this simple penance wash out all his sins. "But you will see," the babu added, "he will never see Káshi."

It was true. Chandra Narayan died at Moghal Serai the next morning, as his carriage was being shunted on to the branch-line, almost in sight of salvation. A dramatic vindication of the godliness of Siva's city, and one to be quoted with effect by the orthodox.

The news gathered a small crowd outside the carriage. "I told you he would not live," my babu friend remarked with justifiable triumph. Indeed no Hindu could have expected it. I remembered a conversation I had had with an Uriya Brahmin.

"Do you believe," I asked him, "that a Hindu has only to die in Benares to reach heaven?"

"Certainly," he said,—"not only a Hindu, but any man."

"And how can you reconcile it with the justice of the All-Powerful, that any scoundrel, whatever his misdeeds, may attain Paradise like this? Would you have a man's salvation depend on a railway time-table or the punctuality of a train?"

"No wicked man ever does die at Benares," was his answer. "Men go there to die, but they are prevented. Something always calls them away, and they die elsewhere."

And he supported his theology by the fantastic story of an Uriya zemindar who had started on the journey twice, at the point of death, and been restored to health. In spite of his resolution to die at Káshi, he had come home only to fall from the roof of his own house and break his neck.

As the train rolls over the great Dufferin Bridge every one's head is thrust out of the windows, and there is a huge coil of serpentine colour the length of all the carriages, the rainbow blending of the turbans of the faithful. The glittering crescent of shrines and palaces on the river brink holds all eyes. Two only, in the carriage of the prodigal, are dull. And this is just.

The train stops at a station on the left bank

of the river. This is Káshi, the "Splendid," of the Hindus. Benares, in our tongue, is a corruption of the Sanscrit "Varanasi," a name that has been held holy for some thousands of years. Flocks of pilgrims alight at Káshi. The official and the globe-trotter leave the train at Benares cantonment, only two miles distant, though infinitely removed in all material respects as well as in every spiritual attribute. At Káshi men are living in dirty, narrow, complicated alleys, as intricately involved as their own faith. Day and night they are seeking dark and malodorous shrines, consecrated to a superstition whose obscenities they only half understand. While at Benares, in spacious clean houses, detached from one another by walled compounds, live that other half of the Aryan stock whose practical evolution is symbolised by the club, the Spectator, the bicycle, the galvanised iron bath, and the Bible.

As the pilgrims surge out of the train at Káshi, dazed at the strangeness of it all, and encumbered with their brass vessels and wrappings, and maybe the basket in which the particular vessel destined for the holy water resides, they fall a helpless prey to the Pandas,

the most merciless type of religious rogue in India,—men who call themselves Gunga Putra, sons of the Ganges, and take care that the poorest do not leave Káshi before they have paid their last mite to the guardians of the parent stream.

Rajahs and zemindars and men of property are clay in their hands, for the Pandas carry books in which the obligations of any family of substance are immemorially inscribed. If the Rajah of Brahmagiri has written that Manu Lall Khar Khankor was his religious guide on a certain pilgrimage, then the family and descendants of Manu Lall have a claim on the family and descendants of Brahmagiri, so that when any kinsman of Brahmagiri visits Káshi he is beset by a score of these clamorous rogues, each one urging a more intimate claim than the other. Their testimonials, copied, forged, sold, and handed on, spread a network of spurious obligation from Hardwar to Adam's Bridge, into which every pilgrim must fall. So when Ramadasu, the adopted son of Brahmagiri's second wife's cousin, steps out of the Bombay-Delhi express at Muttra Junction on a dark night, it is vain for him to hope to find a

roof anywhere unobserved. He may try to slink away in the shadow of the great girders of the station bridge, but he will not have taken many steps before his identity is discovered—perhaps through his own *birkendass*, if he is foolish enough to travel with one, or more likely the touts of the Pandas will have examined his luggage. Then some fat oily priest, who has not even the good manners to spit the betel out of his mouth, will slouch out of the darkness, touch Ramadasu on the arm and guide him to the nearest lamp-post, where he will open his greasy book and point to the signature of the man's own father. Another will come with the autograph of Brahmagiri himself, and the selection will be complicated by the threefold consideration of the relationship of the signatory to Ramadasu, to the head of the family, as well as the nearness of kin of the present holder to the original recipient of the testimonial. Soon a group of these vultures will be gathered in the little circle of light—shock-headed, coarse-featured, rapacious, whose plump, unwholesome-looking legs the cavalry subaltern returning from his out-station polo-match will survey contemptuously, yet sparing a little

of the sympathy of his kind for the man cornered and dunned. For how should it enter his head that these are the priests of the country bidding for the guidance of a soul to Paradise?

In the case of the poor, one Panda is allotted to many. When the pilgrims alight from the train they are marshalled and herded. The Panda precedes; the pilgrims follow in Indian file. Often the duffle-clad group includes four generations. The wrinkled grandam will totter along, tenacious of the one essential aim, and the suckling babe will be carried somehow with the bundle of bedding, cooking-pots, and household goods with which these simple folk are encumbered from the hour they leave their homes. For some of the poorest dare not commit anything to the keeping of strangers. And no doubt this distrust, which makes them thread the streets with their luggage balanced on their head or slung across their shoulders, is well founded.

The poor will go to the Dharmsala, some great cloistered caravanserai where a hundred or more pilgrims are housed in obscure dimly-lighted cells that reek of lamp-oil and open into a courtyard which they share with the

squirrels and monkeys. The well-to-do, or any who by pious thrift have put by a few rupees for their spiritual adventure, will be lodged and fed in the house of a Panda, the least disinterested of hosts. But no orthodox Hindu will rest or take food until he has attained the great purification in the bosom of Gunga. To-morrow, or the day after, he may start on the Panch Kosi pilgrimage, the six days' circuit of the holy city. But his first steps are to the ghât, down the worn flagstones of the great stairways, past countless little kiosks, image-houses, and spreading sunshades, the hereditary property of priests, to the bamboo platform where the pious stand waist-deep in the holy stream, or squat like rows of gulls by the river's brink, a vast multitude in prayer, in whose perpetual drone the pilgrim's voice is merged.

Emerged, he must receive the caste mark on his forehead and bow the head as the Brahmin pronounces over him the mantra. Then flowers and fruit must be bought for the shrines—yellow marigolds and sweet-scented white *beli*—and rice to throw into the bowls of mendicants: add a vessel of Ganges water, and his spiritual armour is complete. Thus he is led,

looking bewildered or ecstatic, to Gyan Kup, the well where Siva lurks, and drinks a palmful of the stagnant water ladled by the priest; and on to the shrine of Vishéshwar, most potent of all, where all day long an awed crowd throngs round the lingam, scattering flowers and rice and libations of Ganges water on the head of Shiv, many of them, the most prodigal perhaps, returning with a garland hung round their necks by the priest as a token that their offering is blessed. Then to Charan Paduka, Vishnu's feet, the very spot where the god alighted on earth, or to his sacred well, Chákra Pushkarina, sprung from the god's sweat. Then Bhaironath, overshadowed by the tamarind and guarded by the grotesque dog, where the pilgrim is tapped with the peacock fan, and made vicariously familiar with the god. Every alley and street is crowded with recesses and niches in the wall, some open, some grilled and barred, occupied by the bald-pated elephant-trunked Ganesh and his rat, or Saraswati, or the terrific Durga, or Sitala, the small-pox goddess, or half-obscene Phallic things, the Argha, or Linga-Yoni of Siva, and Nandi, his kneeling bull, so that one cannot take a step without

passing before some shrine. And through this sacred maze pilgrims, bidden by some secret flame from their remote jungle homes, pass with heavy dazed looks, casual, it would seem, as to which particular shrine or lingam to honour with a libation, but careful always to throw a petal to Sakshi Binayak witness-bearing Ganesh, as a seal on their pilgrimage. All day long they pass by the gate of the temple. Many bow and pass on; some abase their forehead to the threshold, but few enter. To all, the sinister young priest, who sits within by the altar, makes an answering salutation, as if holding durbar for the god. The threshold is rank with trampled flowers and holy water. From the lingam shop opposite I watched some score go by, and saw every measure of ecstasy and perfunctory worship.

I have heard Benares described as a morbid city, but it did not strike me as such. The superstition, the obscenities, the insatiate and corrupt priesthood—that is to say, the mechanism which has made popular Brahminism what it is—one knew to be there. The unexpected thing is, that in spite of all this there is still something stirring in the sight of these hordes of simple folk, — husbandmen, mechanics, the

backbone of the country,—drawn there by the only light which is perceptible to their blurred vision, and feeling themselves beatified. No doubt they are, if they think so; for the Almighty, who, for some inscrutable reason, has given them over to men to whose interest it is to make everything appear distorted, will not punish them for groping after these guides as best they may. It is this confidence, so blind and pathetic, that detracts from the morbidity of the place. Shake off the touts and drift in the current alone, and you will feel its buoyancy. Here one may meet souls who look as if they had just stepped out of Bethesda, pious folk in whose eyes shines the consciousness of doing good as they conceive it, of wiping out offences, of making good omissions, all in a whirl of sanctity and strangeness and the realisation of dreams. And here no earthly or spiritual evil can touch them, for sudden death is but a step into Paradise. This breathing corpse on the litter, bitten by disease out of all semblance of humanity, the bone even protruding through the skin and looking rotten and mildewed, is but a worn vessel within which the soul is fresh, at the prison gates, ready to escape.

Those charred ashes by the ghât are but the refuse of the skein, the chrysalis shell from which the spirit has leapt to Indra. Everywhere one sees signs of peace.

"The helpless old bundle on his shoulders."

A feeble old Mahratta lady, bent and stricken with disease, totters to the ghât, supported by her two sons, a hand held tightly by each. As the old lady's strength begins to fail her, one of these stalwart blades, a fine upstanding man of thirty-five or forty, stoops and swings the helpless old bundle on his shoulders, where she rides pick-a-back, gripping his sides feebly with her two bare feet thrust forward like antennæ, and clinging to his shoulders with a sort of inert strength, which one feels

is nothing more than the tenacity of the spirit, buoyed up by a bold confidence in heaven and an abundantly justified trust in man. There is no self-consciousness in the group whatever, only a quiet dignity and purpose.

The Mahrattas reached the river with their burden just as a boat drifted slowly down stream past the ghât, and for a moment the eyes of the pious old hag must have met the broad clear gaze of Mrs P., a blonde American lady, who quickly tilted her parasol. I did not see the Mahratta woman closely, but no doubt there were ravages of disease on her face which repelled the fair American. If so, the chivalry of her escort was enhanced. The angle of Mrs P.'s sunshade measured the antipathy of East and West. It was continually tilted. It was tilted again at the same ghât to conceal an offensively corpulent Bengali, and it was quite needlessly tilted at the next, when the guide announced that he could not take ladies to the Nepalese temple on account of the indecent carvings. At the burning ghât it was tilted forty-five degrees. Here two corpses lay on their faggot biers with their feet in the holy water, while a few

paces behind a Dôm was breaking in the skull of a third with a heavy bamboo pole to let the soul escape. Another, wrapped in embroidered cloth, spangled and tinselled, ostentatious to the last, looked pathetically gay, while a group of relatives sat against a *sati* stone near by smoking a hookah, and waiting for the nearest of kin to apply the torch. This tawdry ineffectual remnant, I learnt, had been Chandra Narayan.

At the Manikarnika Ghât the nose of Mrs P.'s boat disturbed a score of the devout. Her party landed and ascended the steps to the Kund. The sunshade now was tilted against the sun, and the air of aloofness found expression in a carefully lifted skirt and hypercritical choice of a path. But this fastidiousness was matched by a veiled woman on the steps, who shrank from Mrs P. as if her subtle aroma of daintiness, and the shadow of her embroidered silk petticoat, Parisian heels, and open-work stockings carried pollution. Presently she gained Vishnu's tank, a fetid pool of miraculous efficacy, and here for a moment the Americans and I came into sympathetic contact. "Will the old girl dip?" I heard one of them say. "I'll lay you two to one she

doesn't." Looking down over the rails, I saw a Brahmin widow seated on the lower step above the pool. The air was nipping, the water bitterly cold, and the widow was an old and weak woman. A priest bent over her and droned mantras, sprinkled her with holy water and *beli* petals, and turned to his mantras again. Two irreverent young urchins sat on the steps behind, making merry over their grandam's bath. Higher up the stairs a sedate attendant waited with a cloth in which the old lady was to wrap herself as she unwound her wet *sarhi*. It was an intense moment. Would she dip? The whole interest of Brahminism centred in that; nothing mattered so much in all Káshi. It was a supreme test. If that delicately nurtured old lady enters the cold, filthy, stagnant water and submerges the crown of her head, Vishnu is still a potent flame. She rose and descended slowly, step by step, to her waist, to her armpits. She dipped, and vindicated her faith. The urchins were dragged in after her to unwilling ablutions, and we turned away, glad in heart but ashamed.

From the balcony of a flower-shop one can look down straight on the gate of Vishéshwar

without being observed, and note from a few yards the expression of every face that goes in and out. In the narrow compass between the lintels one may see the epitome of Hindustan, and to any one who knows enough of its dark worship to divine even vaguely the impulses that move the people, there is no more illuminating sight in India. In the morning the gate is thronged. Pilgrims are entering four abreast, while others are trying to thrust their way out, holding their brass vessels of Ganges water over their heads, lest they should be jostled and spill it,—for there are other shrines to visit and other libations to pour. It is a heterogeneous crowd. A group of unveiled Dekhani women come along in dark blue and green, and colour all the street. They are pilgrims from the south. There is peace in their faces. Beside them, equally devout if less picturesque, are women of the city. Many of them carry infants, whose short frocks are often in brilliant contrast to the maternal *sarhi*. A bundle of deep red velvet glows on a bosom of puce. There is no room for disharmony. An orange babe and a magenta mother are not amiss. And these naked coal-eyed infants in arms

are strangely unimpressed. Held in a fold of the *sarhi*, they sport with their mother's ear-rings, dreamily chew sugar-cane, or profanely tap the gate and walls of the shrine with a lacquer stick.

As the Dekhani women leave the shrine and flood the passage again with indigo tints, they meet a contrary wave of orange. The blue is thrust to the wall, and the orange sweeps imperiously through. It is the Mahunt of Ajodhya, a heavy, square-faced, bull-throated man, arch-priest of Siva, who rides proudly in his lacquered palanquin, wreathed in marigolds, attended by his chelas,—Brahmins all, and only less proud than himself. A dozen precede, and a score or more follow, deep-browed, sunken-eyed, bald-pated, orange-robed ecclesiastics, who need no lictors, so eminent and palpable is their authority. The troop passes without an obeisance to the shrine.

The parted crowd meet again and surge towards the gate. A stout Bilaspuri, with his short beard, ear-rings, and pail of brass, forges perfunctorily through. A shock-headed Bengali slips in behind and gains the court-yard in his wake. A dainty Sikh lady, her pink veil tilted forward at the mouth, is

thrust against the wall unheeded, while her skirted Punjabi sister is held up by a crowd of drab-coloured pilgrims from Dinapur. Into this packed throng intrudes the sacred bull of Siva. I watched the privileged beast saunter down the passage, nosing the ground in front of every niche that contained a shrine. From Ganesh he stole a sour berry or two; from Sinaichar, the Saturday god, a bunch of fallen leaves. As he turned the corner the vendor of flowers by Anapurna's temple lifted his basket uneasily; but he passed, hesitated at the gate of Vishéshwar, and elected to enter, thrusting his nose and shoulders into the mob. Soon after, a sturdy up-country vagabond tried to arrogate to himself the same licence and hustle a path through. Cries of dismay and protest met him, as vessels were upset and holy water spilled to the ground, and the clamour brought in three policemen from the street,—turbaned, khaki-clad servants of the Raj,—who ejected him with more cuffs than ceremony.

The commotion roused a lean mendicant who had been waiting by the gate for at least an hour, as still as a moth on a wall. Hunger, or the sight of his empty bowl, transformed him.

He awoke, like an insect, from dead passivity into flight, and began to skim among the crowd as a bee among flowers, touching this one on the shoulder, the other on the arm, and stroking another on the nape of the neck, offering his empty bowl, always in vain. For some reason or other the pious would have none of him, and he flitted down the alley to Gyan Kup without a dole.

Many who pass through the gate have the air of merchants and brokers. The Marwari seems to have made his bargain with God. It is a case of definite gift and definite reward: he has bought so much security and paid the price. So he strides out briskly, without the least awe, for he is a busy man and feels that this is possibly the least remunerative of his deals during the day.

But the measure and intensity of faith are best observed in the evening, before the second tide of worshippers is full, when the pious may make the *Sashtangam*, or prostration of the eight members, without fear of being trampled under-foot. A sad-eyed cowled Brahmin widow, who has been carried to the gate in a palanquin, floats through ecstatically. A Saddhu follows, and presses his forehead in the mire.

One may wait ten minutes before one sees another such expression of intense faith. The martial Sikh merely stoops to rub his hand in a puddle of votive water and rub it on his brow. Others are content to throw a flower at Ganesh over the door. One feels that if one could have stood here fifty or a hundred years ago, one would have seen less casual worship and more prostrations. The ritual is intact, but the idolaters decadent. They wear shoes, and generally defile themselves with leather, omit the salute to the ten winds of the body, let the shadow of pariahs cross their food, herd with people of lower caste in packed railway carriages, carry over the threshold the dead who have passed late in the orbit of the moon, and let rude little boys throw stones at Siva's bull and go to school without an offering to Ganesh. In morals, perhaps, they are no better or worse, but that has nothing to do with their faith.

What makes the Hindu so complex and inscrutable is that there is no custom so bound up with his tradition but some sect or family will be privileged to violate it. Practices which are abhorrent at one time are prescribed at another. There are seasons

when he is bidden to eat flesh, drink intoxicating drinks, and defy principles the infringement of which, at ordinary times, would lose him his caste. In every district, too, there are folk who have peculiar rites and customs contradictory to the general ideal. So when all these castes and sects are drawn together to Benares for common worship from the ends of Hindustan, it is not to be wondered at that one comes across many drifting atoms which must remain mysterious. My last impression of Vishéshwar is a Punjabi mendicant with a turban of pale saffron gauze, abundance of fine clothes, a saffron scarf swung over his shoulders, and wreaths of marigold round his neck. He strode up jauntily to the gate, took from the folds of his dress a penny English flute and played little snatches of music with the careless finish of a master. He asked no alms and received none; but once an oddity in an orange shift gave him a wreath of marigolds, which he added to those round his neck,—a simple but to me inscrutable action, and one of the many hundred things I saw by the gate of Vishéshwar and did not understand. Why did he stand there and play the flute? It and his staff

proclaimed the man a beggar, but I never saw any person less like one in my life than this lusty Punjabi with his quizzical patronising mien, his roguish assertiveness, and general air of wellbeing. And what tie of sympathy, fraternity, duty, love, or fear could there be between him and the apparently infirm little body in the orange shift whom he followed twenty paces up the street?

The mob of religious mendicants perplexes, attracts, and repels. The wild-eyed Bairagi, smeared all over with ashes of cow-dung, and wearing coils of rope matted in his coarse dyed hair; the Yogi on his bed of spikes; the Sannyasi, naked or dressed like a clown; the gentle Saddhu in his salmon-coloured robe; the Dandi with the wand that must not touch the ground; the Talingi with his staff and gourd and antelope's skin,—are at first-sight elements of drama, but one soon tires of them and their harlequin gear, and finds the true romance in the simple devotee. Yet one in ten thousand may be the genuine anchorite dear to the romancist, the man who has weighed the fat years with their cares and obligations and found them lean and light as thistledown in the scale against the eman-

cipation of the spirit. One likes to think that if one waits long enough a familiar figure will pass through the gate wearing the *rudraksha*, and a votary make obeisance to the lingam who could find his way blindfold from Petty Cury to Magdalen Bridge.

To understand the spirit in which the Saddhu is received one must readjust all one's ideas of almsgiving. The Hindu mendicant is honoured, he demands, gratitude is out of the question; alms are his birthright. When refused, he has been known to enter the house of the offender and break his cooking-vessels. In seasons of pilgrimage flocks of Sannyasis scour the land like locusts. At Benares there must be many thousands of them. Twice in a day I saw the house of the Maharajah of D—— invaded. First, in the morning, I was sitting in the verandah overlooking the river when four Saddhus entered by the corkscrew stairs, passed the Sikh guard by the door and the rifle-rack, and gained the balcony unchallenged. Four staffs were planted in four flower-pots, each with a little salmon-coloured rag attached, Saddhu colour, to proclaim that the staff was all they possessed in the world. They waited patiently, and were

fed. These were casual visitors. But in the evening of the same day, when I was again a guest in the house, the licensed pensioners came. These were twenty Saddhus, who squatted in a corner turret set apart for their use, and soon raised such a clamour of abuse

They waited patiently.

and indignant protest that one of the Maharajah's servants was sent to ask what was the matter. Their grievance was that they had been given inferior, or insufficient, tŏbacco.

It was good fortune to be admitted into the house of such an orthodox Hindu as the Maharajah of D——. The building is one of the finest on the river front, equally beautiful

and massive. The balcony, where guests are received, is supported by two immense corbelled pilasters, and projects over the ghât, or, as it seems from within, over the Ganges. The face of the house may be described as sixty feet of solid foundation and breastwork, supporting fifty feet of palace. Add the flags descending from the base to the stream, and the whole pile from the topmost parapet to the water measures, when Gunga is not in flood, a good hundred-and-fifty feet.

From the balcony one looks down on the house of the Maharana of X., an ancient neglected mansion, but inveterately Hindu. On the roof is a garden which the Maharana's sacred bull shares with the monkey and the peacock. From the shade of a tamarind tree squat Hanuman surveys Gunga, the silted sand beyond, and the packed city spreading out towards the east. A sacred prospect, but to the god's eyes no doubt imperfect. For seen like this, in a bird's-eye view from the roof of a house overlooking the river or from the railway bridge as the train rolls into Káshi, Benares is as deceptive as the ordinary Hindu. Two alien things dominate

the city, the great minarets of Aurungzeb's mosque and the massive girders of the Dufferin Bridge. That is to say, the two most prominent features of Benares are merely casual and uncharacteristic, as distant from the heart of the place as any expression of the human mind can be. They obtrude incongruously, mere surface excrescences, while underneath hidden world-old influences which have outlasted change and revolution course through the body like sap in the bough. The Hindus were throwing marigolds at the feet of Siva when our ancestors were dressed in woad; they performed the sacrifice of the *Hom* with precisely the same rites hundreds of years before Attila swept over Europe. Conquest does not impress them; the motor and the locomotive are not half so wonderful as Vishnu's footprints. And our modern engines give impetus, rather than check, to the cause of the priests, for every year pilgrims flock to Benares in greater numbers. The sum of devotion may be less, but the devotees are more. We span the Ganges for them with iron, and the faithful use our road to approach their gods without sparing any of their awe

for the new miracle. To the devout we and our railways are a passing accident, to be used or ignored as indifferently as stepping-stones across a brook. The city is too old in spirit to resent those iron girders, that stucco mission church; they are merely another wrinkle on her brow. The parable is repeated from Rameswaram to Peshawar,—India is too old to resent us. Yet who can doubt that she will survive us?

The secret of her permanence lies, I think, in her passivity and her power to assimilate. The faith that will not fight cannot yield. Before I left Káshi I met a strictly orthodox Hindu B.A., one of those elusive unsatisfactory beings who is ready to explain Karma by heredity, the Sankhya philosophy by evolution, and yet stand by the laws of Manu and his gods.

"Why, of course," he said, "I believe that any one who dies within the Panch Kosi road at Benares will attain salvation, *cef* he has faith enough to believe that by so dying he will be saved."

Thus the wretched man stripped his gods of their divinely capricious power. I felt that

the terrific arm of Siva had fallen limp, the Trimurti become impotent and dishonoured, the effulgence of Brahma's godhead dimmed, and Káshi "splendid" and miraculous no more, but the mother of quibbles wholly rational, trite, and dull.

IN RAJPUTANA.

THE best part of India is coloured yellow in the map; it is also the most sterile and unproductive. For the kind of land which has produced the Sikh and the Rajput does not allow any form of life to run quickly to seed. Chivalry, clanship, prestige, belong to the desert and the mountain; but in fat lands the god is the belly. This is a platitude; but it is impossible to enter Rajputana from east, west, or south without remarking on it.

Nerve is largely a climatic product. It needs a thin dry air for tautness, and relaxes like a sjambok where the atmosphere is steamy. It is no fault of the Bengali, Telugu, or Tamil that he does not make a soldier, and no particular credit to the Sikh or Pathan that he makes a good one. But climate is not everything: police, order, and security are as demoralising to the Oriental as humidity in the

air. The Pathan from across the Khyber is a better man than his neighbour in Peshâwar; and the Gurkha, who is used to settling his differences in his own way, can give points to the plainsman, who is overshadowed by the magistrate. A man who knows the Indian army can gauge the mettle of a regiment by the *locale* of its enlistment; and he could, if he were brave enough, make a map of India and its frontiers showing the distribution of courage over the different race areas. In such a map—coloured as in the charts of rainfall, temperature, geological strata, and vegetable products—Rajputana would appear tainted with the rose-pink of Jaipur.

In a similar hypothetical map of a century or two ago the country would shine, perhaps, in the full crimson of active militarism. But when the sword is rusty the blood runs thinner. If the Rajput is not what he was, it is because we have taken from him the pursuit of arms. Yet his survival in the land he has held so bravely is due to the British, who only came in time to save the race, exhausted with centuries of strife, from conquest by more vigorous invaders.

But the Rajputs retain their pride, and, if

we can trust their historian, it is founded on a splendid tradition. They walk and ride as men conscious of a past. More than any race they love distinction. And they cling to a boast of heraldry that ennobles the poorest,—for every true Rajput is in some distant collateral way the kin of the Maharana, and can lay claim to unmixed blood for close on two thousand years. Tod, their devoted chronicler, traces their armorial bearings to a date before Troy, and believes that the ancestors of Udaipur carried their Palladium into the field against Alexander. And though we may have believed this historian to be no more than a romancing advocate, and too credulous in the good faith of bards, we feel that this credulity is contagious as we cross the Rajput's frontier, breathe his crisp air, and admire his erect bearing and the way he sits his horse.

Jaipur, lying on the highway between Bombay and Delhi, is generally the first, and often the only, Rajput city the stranger visits. It has thus obtained, in relation to other cities, a disproportionate meed of praise and the inevitable reaction of disparagement. At the time of my visit depreciation was in the air. Two of the correspondents with the Prince had

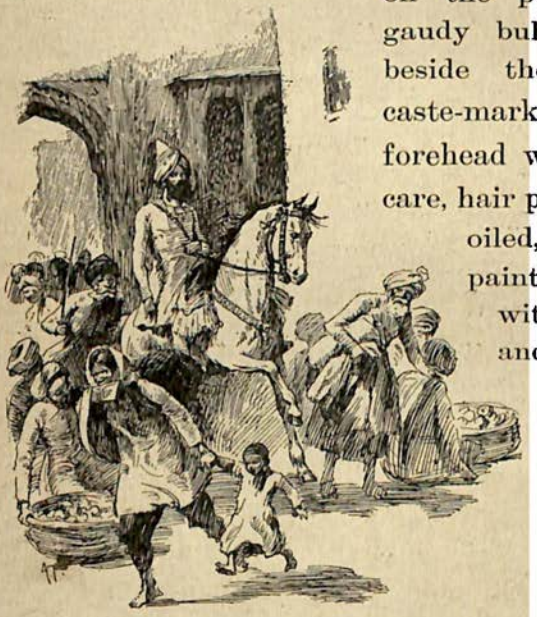
recorded their displeasure, and one had called Jaipur vulgar. It reminded one lady in the hotel of a Christmas cake, another of a strawberry ice, a third of the *taziahs* and such tawdriness as the Mahomedans carry in the Mohurrum. "Stucco" was on everybody's lips; and an American called it jerry-built, and dived into his 'Murray' to see if he could "catch another city" on the way to Bombay. And all this resentment arose because the city is coloured a rosy pink all over, like almond blossoms, and so unsubstantial-looking that one feels it must have risen "like an exhalation," and might as easily be spirited away. As a matter of fact, most of it is very solid, but high parapets of thin plaster, rising from the roofs of the houses all down the street, suggest the pretence of a third storey, and add to the air of make-believe and unreality that pervades the whole. The high embattled, crenelated walls and gateways may have been built round the city to secure it, or the city may have been conjured up inside. The last explanation that is likely to suggest itself is, that they are due to the same elfish agency as the rose-pink fabric which they include—to expand the American lady's simile—like an

elaborate piece of confectionery in a stout iron pan.

It is the pinkiness and unsubstantiality of Jaipur that has earned it detractors,—features that to other eyes constitute its charm. They give it just the colour and lightness that the dun earth and sullen rock demand. Imagine a city of pale-pink houses with walls green-shuttered, and many of them having their upper storeys intricately painted and covered with white geometrical designs and drawings of elephants, peacocks, and rajas going out to war. And pigeons everywhere, more than I have seen in any other city, so that the end of a street is often a vista of dancing grey, shot over a flawless blue background of sky.

Most cities in the desert take their colour from the sand and the clay; Jaipur suffuses its environment with tints of its own. Figures seen in distant perspective down the street give one the idea of a shredded patchwork quilt, fluttering like gossamer in a faint stir of wind as the thin air seems to palpitate and make them quiver in the strong sunlight. The harmony is as haphazard as in flowers sprinkled over a field, but every detail has some distinction of its own. A dot of a child

is often the most gorgeous point of colour in a crowd. In the bazaar one's eyes often follow some serious, impish, or consequential urchin in magenta or purple, perched on an ass, or on the pole of a gaudy bullock-cart beside the driver, caste-marked on the forehead with great care, hair parted and oiled, eyebrows painted over with henna, and clothes generally spangled with tinsel. But before the diminishing speck is absorbed in the traffic, some other drifting atom will come along. The *bairâgi*, perhaps, decked in peacock feathers and fantastic rags, with a turreted cap on his head, will push towards the carriage proclaiming a most un-



A Rajput horseman will cause a stir.

spiritual appetite, which his vows bind him to ignore. Or a Rajput horseman will cause a stir as he forges through the crowd, sitting straight in his saddle, so marked an aristocrat that his dignity derives nothing from the group of retainers running evenly behind with drawn swords.

On the pavement one sees again and again a particular type of Brahmin who never seems vaguely abstracted, as many do, but moves about as if he were appraising something definite. His bent is clearly more academic than spiritual, and his special style of dignity recalls illustrations of Shakespeare's Venetian plays. Of such a type is the Maharaja's astronomer, who showed me over the Observatory, explaining the instruments of Jey Singh II. (1718-34), lately restored partly through his aid. As he exhibited the gnomon, yantras, and meridional wall, strange words like "equator," "declination," "azimuth" scattered oddly in his speech, a high-flown Hindi, sometimes attracted me to the too technical matter in hand; but most of the time I was only conscious of enjoying a rather antique experience, and thinking how this or that artist ought to come East to catch for his canvas

this inimitably precise and scarlet-coated old sage by my side.

Thronged as the streets are with foot-passengers, one sees more mounted men in Jaipur than in most cities. Camels, horses, elephants, and donkeys crowd the bazaars, and the square behind the palace where the Maharaja's elephants are watered is a sight worth seeing. The earth-coloured camels step fastidiously to the well where the water is drawn for them, which they drink with the mincing propriety of an old maid, sipping it as if with reluctance induced to drink such stuff, and between sips lifting up their heads from the leathern vessels to gaze side-ways at something else, as if they were the most dainty creatures in the world instead of being altogether uncouth and abnormal. The camel aping the parochial old lady with prayer-book and bugles is perennially amusing, but in deportment he yields to the elephant, — an anachronism which no custom can stale. The Maharaja's beasts have their foreheads and trunks painted over with designs in red, green, and gold. The largest I saw, a mountain of embodied sobriety, belonged to the fighting stud. He was returning to the city with a load

of neem branches like a huge walking arcade, when he stopped at the well for his draught and fell into a reverie which the mahout was too considerate to disturb. What his thoughts and dreams can have been Heaven only knows, but if the eye is any index to wisdom one can imagine him contemplating the more abstract of the philosophies. Beside him a Diogenes might have appeared hysterical. As he stood there with his untidy trousered legs, for all the world like the pyjamas of a German store-keeper I knew at Chantaboun, his huge unwieldy body, enormous mangy ears, minute, tolerant, humorous eyes, provoking awe and laughter, I felt for the hundredth time in my life that the beast was a revelation, and that no amount of acquaintance could make him appear common or familiar.

After a month of cities and hotels, if one has any open-air instincts, there is sure to come a craving for a few days of natural India. First the wearisome troop of guides, touts, and boxwallahs prepare one for an exodus, then some evening a long drive into the untamed desert beyond the city walls will make it a necessity. This is the time for shikar. Small-game shooting is good nearly

everywhere, and ideal days may be spent on the large jhils which are crowded with wild-fowl, or in the sandy scrub jungle where one may kick up hare and partridge every few yards. Then being in a strange country, it is natural to wish to take home a head or two of unfamiliar fauna. Black buck and chinkara are more or less abundant all over Rajputana, and in pursuit of them one can often get into closer touch with the people, and find excuses for penetrating into many delightful hidden places. I will not earn the odium of Residents or district officials by giving away any particular locality.

One is left, perhaps, at some miniature "local station," where there is no clock and only one train a day; the staff apparently consists of a single clerk on a stool in a little shed about the size of a P. & O. cabin, and a dreamy-looking person in a kind of faded uniform who walks about the platform looking like a policeman. By the wire fence two camels are kneeling, sent by the nearest village hakim, and there is generally some straight hard-bitten Rajput standing by his horse, appointed as guide by the local chief. It is not easy for a stranger to determine this man's status. The camel-

driver will probably address him out of courtesy as Thakur Sahib, but his extreme thinness gives one the idea that he is stinted in food; his clothes and accoutrements are poor, and the parched desert all round explains it. Yet the thought is sure to cross one's mind several times during the day that it will be difficult to induce him to accept a present at parting.

A particular day I have in mind was in a district where the Thakurs shoot regularly, and game is consequently much more shy than in States where it is preserved. Here when anything is to be done the camel and the aboriginal Bhil are called upon to help, being of all creatures the most inured to dearth. I had both with me: the Bhils strode in the wake of the camels and did not fall behind, though they ran swiftly to the top of knolls to left and right and searched the horizon for a herd. They were naked except for the loin-cloth, and apparently as tough as leather. For stalking, the camels were a disappointment, since the antelope, when we came on a herd, looked at them with unnatural suspicion. Only once before noon did we get within two hundred yards of them, though we followed

patiently without any hostile sign, until I was tempted to take a shot from the saddle and missed.

At midday in late March the sun is blistering, and when the herd has taken fright and become merged in the dead *âk* bushes at the foot of the distant hill, hope for a moment is low, and the driver will urge his camel to a green patch beside a well that marks a clump of trees and an acre of irrigated land. Here there is sure to be a shelter on a mound, and a *machan* high in a neem or tamarind tree where little boys sit up at night to frighten the beasts from the corn. A pair of gentle-eyed cows revolve slowly to the drowsy moan of the well-wheel, which is musical and monotonous, and in harmony with one's mood. As the wheel revolves the water falls continuously into a trough from the buckets, and trickles into a field of poppies, whose white and purple heads make an exquisite show on the dun plain.

The place is asleep. The serious, patient cows, the veiled woman in a dark-red *sarhi*, the aged cultivator and his goat, the still poppies, seem to be part of some rite, and the drone of the wheel is an incantation. All

are the ministers of sleep. The camel kneels reluctantly, sniffs at the water and refuses it with *hauteur*, stiffens a sinuous neck and relapses into dreams. The two wild-eyed, starved-looking Bhils make a stir among the trees and detach a handful of sour green berries, then yield to the mood of the place. I hold out meat and bread and cheese and eggs, but they shake the head stolidly. Though not Hindus, they have a tradition of some kind, vague as their own origin, but indestructible. So one sinks back inertly into the shade with the sense that one is in a land of ideals where the spirit is of more account than the flesh.

After an hour of this peace one remembers that there is something to be done. The Englishman is not wholly material; and it is the sight of the rifle leaning against the tree that challenges his ideal, such as it is,—a more illogical one, perhaps, than the Bhils', but one which, when weighed against his, may help to adjust the balance. For in both the tradition is some agency of the mind guiding the physical part to a renunciation which is unintelligible to the other.

As the Englishman moves with pain, stiffens

his knees, straightens his back, and lifts himself from the ground, the spirit of humour that seems to reside in Evolution must smile grimly; for it is part of the injustice of his plan in its present stage that the Bhil should suffer through his own ideals and the Englishman's too.

Stiff, dry, parched, and shrivelled with the heat, the Englishman projects himself from the scanty bit of shade into the sun. The camel is roused and bubbles incoherent protests; the two Bhils obey dumbly; the shikari stretches himself with a resigned smile; the horse responds perfunctorily with a last attempt to carry off in his teeth a heap of half-dead leaves. But there is not a sign anywhere of the beast whose existence has brought this odd assembly together, and there does not seem any reason why one's camel should be impelled to one point of the desert more than another. Beyond the village there is nothing but baked earth, burnt through, one feels sure, deeper than wells are bored. The refraction from the rocky surface burns upward till one feels as if one could strike sparks by the friction of khaki against the skin.

Only three miles off in a clump of trees is the station where one meets the evening train. Against the magnetism of this rest and shade one needs faith and a wholesome disgust at failure. A blank day and the sense of having given in is not to be thought of after coming sixty miles for a purpose. Moreover, that tradition must be vindicated in the sight of the Rajput and the Bhils. A single head will be enough if it measures decently, and it will hang on the wall between the cheetal and the serow. Then one need not go black-buck shooting again: it is poor sport. At this stage of despondency it is well to recall days when hope was even lower, which shine in the memory through a golden chance at the close. There was the antelope which was provoked to a duel with another buck, in which his vigilance was for the time averted; the cheetal that was playing with a jackal in an unexpected nullah; the chinkara that stood on a sand-dune against the skyline, and was shot from the tonga as one drove home after nine hours' fruitless stalking in the sun.

It must have been three when we saw a large *bund* ahead, and I slid down from the camel determined that such good cover must

not be wasted even if I had to stalk vacancy. I crept up to the *bund*, and peeping over it saw that my instinct was true. A buck was standing beyond perfectly unconcerned, offering a straightforward broadside shot at 120 yards. The bullet hit him in the windpipe, and he fell almost without a twitch. The horns measured 21 inches. Then a few moments afterwards we marked another enter a patch of scrub, and I got him with a running shot at 80 yards.

When one's bullet has gone home, it is a good time to light one's pipe somewhere under the shade of a neem-tree, bask in the dry heat which is no longer obnoxious, think of the silk-hatted, season-ticketed mob jostling one another at Charing Cross and Waterloo, thank God that one is not compelled to be one of these, and generally give rein to the sense of expansion and the purging of humours which solitude and the wilderness inspire.

When we turned towards the railway, the camel even seemed more interested in life. His gurglings became more musical, and he condescended to pluck a prickly teazle, and swung his head into the boughs of a *dhâk*-tree to detach a scarlet blossom. The shikari

ceased to be merely passive, and began to make detours and wheel his horse into the low scrub, holding his muzzle-loading rifle, charged with buckshot, across the beast's withers, ready to despatch the hare as he ran out.

Then came the parting, a complicated moment. It is always a delicate matter to tip a Rajput, but the famine-stricken nature of the country where one shoots is likely to tempt a sportsman to persist. But let it not be in a village or any place where one's proud escort may be observed, or he will go without reward for his day's toil. Perhaps behind some tree one may get the chance of placing the gift in his hand. Then emphasise the friendliness the man is sure to inspire. While he protests and says in his kindly hospitable way that the pleasure of the day has been his, perhaps if one turns round suddenly and makes some remark about the camel there is a chance that he may forget the money in his palm and the matter of accepting it. Or a particularly martial salaam from the Englishman when no one is looking may elicit a like response and a considerate compliance. The favour will be his.

My reminiscences are of the poorest, and incidentally the proudest, soil in Rajputana. I have heard that there are districts where the Rajput is like other men; in Mewar he certainly is not. The Maharana is a survival of an old order, and his subjects seem to mirror, in a fainter degree, his chivalry. His palace at Udaipur fills the cup of the valley... The city is nothing but a group of houses clustered round it, so that looking down at it from the surrounding hills one sees only the palace by the lake, a fortress secured in old times by a gaunt wedge of mountains from physical invasion, just as it is secured to-day by the Maharana against the inroads of more subversive forces. Udaipur is the stronghold of conservatism. It is inspired with a tradition. Entering it is like coming upon a detached survival of old Greece, where some hard-bitten Theban or Spartan stock have held out stoutly against change, and clung to the old standards. There is even something of the right spectacular element, though too luxurious, in the bright islanded lake among the hills, the marble palace stretching down to it, the Rajput cavalier on the embankment with his curved sword, and the file of Mar-

wari ladies descending to the *ghat* with a subdued chattering, pitcher on head, ample-bosomed, and erect as Syrinx, and wearing a thin clinging shift embroidered with silver.

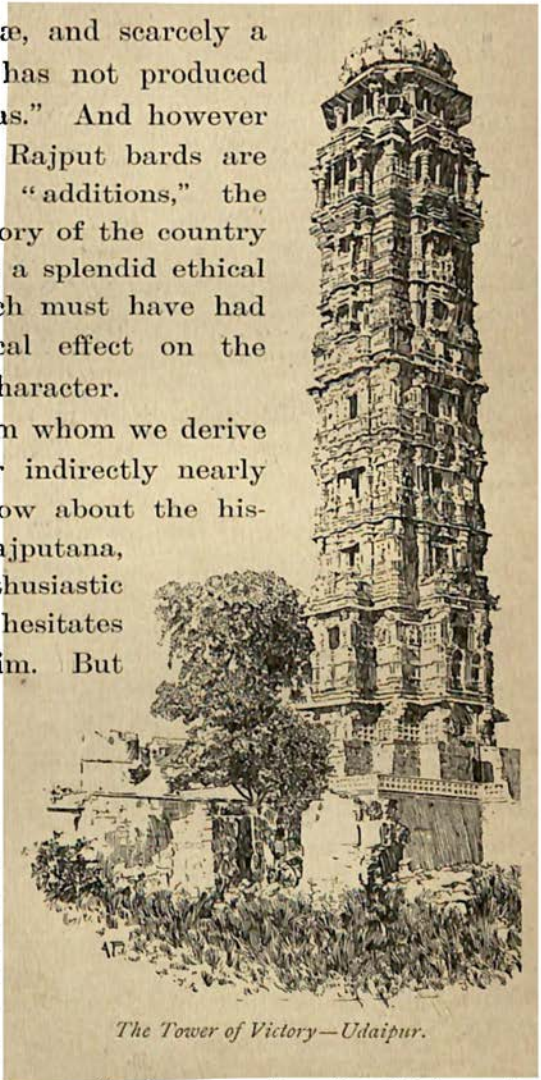
On the lake there are no boats save the Maharana's state barge, and some smaller craft belonging to him moored by it. I asked the reason, though I knew instinctively that boating was a royal prerogative. The wide sailless lake confirms all one feels on entering the gates—that one is in the orbit of a despotism, which, judging by what one knows of other parts of the East, is the best kind of rule for the Asiatic, provided that the principle of it is clannish. For the highest and lowest types of subjects are the products of the despot,—the clansmen whose chiefs have existed to keep the clan intact and preserve its prestige, as well as the tribes who are made slavish by exploitation. In Mewar the influence of tradition is so pervasive that a certain pride and independence seem to have filtered through to the lowest classes, permeating to the Bhil and other folk who cannot boast Rajput blood. I was not surprised that most of the Maharana's servants refused tips, but when a poor villager would not take any

largess for bringing me water from a distance, saying that he was pleased enough if he had been able to help me in any way, I felt there was something distinct in the air. Even as I first drove through the city gates I noticed spirit in the flick of the whip my little tonga boy aimed at an obstructive goat, crying, "Bagal, bakri, bakri"—"Goat, goat, get out of the way,"—and a sturdy independence in the salutation of a Mahomedan fakir, who bowed me in with friendly mockery, and was the only beggar I saw in Udaipur.

As for the Rajputs themselves, they have reason to be proud. Their pride is of the clan: their chief is of themselves. He is the head of the oldest family in India, and can trace his descent direct to Rama, and thence fabulously to the sun. His is the only royal Hindu family that has never given a daughter in marriage to the Moghuls. The humblest Rajput can boast that he and his chief are the descendants of common ancestors, who rode out on crusades from these same hills to drive the barbarian out of Gya, and in after years, with wavering success but unshaken courage, opposed their small army against the resources of an empire. "There is not a village," says Tod, "that has not had its

Thermopylæ, and scarcely a city that has not produced its Leonidas." And however much the Rajput bards are given to "additions," the whole history of the country testifies to a splendid ethical ideal, which must have had its practical effect on the national character.

Tod, from whom we derive directly or indirectly nearly all we know about the history of Rajputana, is so enthusiastic that one hesitates to trust him. But it is a fact that all Englishmen who come much into contact with the better class of Rajput are equally impressed. In Udaipur I



The Tower of Victory—Udaipur.

met an old resident (not Resident) who is credited with being received more intimately among the Rajput families than any foreigner has been since the days of Tod. In half an hour he gave me more instances of chivalry, refinement, and sensibility among these people than I could have come across in twice the time in the annals of their historian. I left him with my head full of picturesque feudal scenes. He described the impressive ceremony of a Thakur's initiation when he comes of age and solemnly makes a present of all his possessions to the Maharana, who returns them, and at the same time invests his subject with the sword; and more impressive, the journey of the Maharana to Eklinga, where every moon, in the capacity of Siva Dewan-ji, Siva's arch-priest, he receives the holy fire from the Brahmins, and performs the ceremony of *arthi*, passing it seven times round the image of Shiv. For the Maharana is the spiritual as well as the temporal head of his people.

The common people seldom come into contact with him, save when he passes along the road by the lake; and they huddle into the rocks or among the Babul trees, and make

deep obeisance as his splendid *cortége* sweeps by. First a score of lancers riding like centaurs, then the Presence, then the Court—men who would be kings elsewhere—in carriages drawn by four horses. Then more lancers. The Sunborn, incidentally king and hierarch, sits in his carriage like an image of Kartikeyya, God of War, as unconscious of all this homage as is his first parent of the devotional glow which suffuses at his passing the red and purple hills of Rajasthan.

The Maharana's feudal conservatism is so tempered with benevolence that he is a much privileged ruler, and his authority is the cause of no anxious responsibilities to the British Government. It is true he was not easily persuaded that his State would benefit by a railway; but in this rare instance in which he hesitated to fall in with the wishes of the Raj, the event made his scruples appear well-founded, for plague came with the permanent way.

Few such types of the uncompromising old school remain, but the new order promises well. At the Mayo College, Ajmere, certain crusted solar influences are being exposed to the solvent of Western ideals, while certain

natural affinities are being given free play. To the casual visitor the affinities are the more striking, for the result of the experiment, externally at least, is the kind of boy one meets with at a school like Eton — a youth whose composition exhibits an attractive balance of swagger and modest ingenuousness, and whose inherited traditions sit lightly on him, and are incapable of formula. The old style is ridden by the authority that resides in him; but at Ajmere infants of preternatural gravity are early relieved of the burden of self-importance, caught in the mill, and gently humanised. Five hours' work a-day and plenty of riding and cricket are not conducive to vapours. The boys go to bed tired and get up early, and the routine of the classes is alleviated by such text-books as 'The Prisoner of Zenda' and 'Rupert of Hentzau,' which impart chivalrous ideas and the best English idiom at the same time. At Ajmere a boy is popular for being "a sportsman" in the colloquial English sense of the word, which implies a kind of moral and physical expansiveness. Other claims to distinction are little regarded. A young chief, and future ruler of millions, was pointed out to me as "a rotter,"

—he, shirked games. The political scope of a college like this needs no exposition.

The first thing one notices about the place is that it has a tone. One drives up on a cricket day to the enclosure within the grounds, where one finds a group of the elder boys waiting to receive visitors. One of these youths will come forward and show you the way to the pavilion, and talk naturally about the game. You are struck with his accent. "Who's in?" you ask.

"They are. We declared at two hundred, one wicket down. The score? They're ninety something for eight wickets. I think they are a bit shaken up with the journey."

This was the actual state of the game when I arrived to see Mayo playing a rival chiefs' college. In a few minutes the last two wickets fell, when there was a rush on to the ground to play tip-and-run, in which members of both teams joined, though they had been batting and fielding all day in the sun. Where was the apathy one associates with the upper classes in India? One saw it in a few faces in the pavilion too stubbornly indurated to yield to any solvent; but it was not the general tone. One was struck by the colour and

animation all round. The costume of players and spectators alike consisted of white pantaloons, after the fashion of Jodhpur riding-breeches; turban tied according to the sept, Gehlote, Rahtore, Chohan, &c., whatever it might be; and the stripped *panchranga* blazer of the Rajputs, the five colours of the sun. The blazer alone was British, and the colour of that was national: only the clean Conduit Street cut of it stood for the direction given to a pre-existing bias. So the dress seemed to me to symbolise nicely the product of Ajmere; for the boys are not hybrids, but if anything the more Rajput for the subtle and unconscious affining and refining process which must result from experiments of the kind.

My host deputed X., a young man of solar origin, to show me over the college and grounds. The House system is of course essential, for the Mayo boys are not all Rajputs, nor are they all Hindus. The buildings are detached at broad intervals over a well-kept ground, reclaimed from barrenness by the laborious application of well water. The rooms are clean and neat, and in most of them the walls are hung with sporting trophies. We fell to discussing them, and a sambhur head

turned the talk to deer and antelopes. I was telling the young Rajput about a stag I had met with across the Himalayas, and he surprised me by describing the curve of its horns and differentiating it nicely from another species. He quoted the record head:—

"55¾ inches. It was shot by Captain What's-his-name—Hume, I think—in Sikkim. I'll look it up in Ward."

Presently we reached his room, and he took down Mr Rowland Ward's fascinating book from his shelf, found the beast, illustrated with his finger again how the two brow antlers bent downwards on either side, and proved that his measurements were correct. In the margin opposite the picture he had written, "I should love to shoot one."

I had never in ten years of the East come across any one so refreshingly unoriental. The accuracy, the enthusiasm, the interest in wild things for their own sake, apart from any personal vanity in the destruction of them; the frank admission that he had never shot a tiger, but that he meant to, upset all my ideas of Hindu youth, derived from a fairly close acquaintance with them, and I wondered how

much was due to Ajmere. A few minutes later we got mixed up with another group of visitors, and a pompous old gentleman from Bengal, who was very much impressed with X.'s rank, embarrassed us all by trying to squeeze his portliness against the wall in order to let him pass. X.'s airy "Oh, go ahead, please," "Please go ahead, sir," was as English as any one could wish. It dissipated one's forebodings of ultimate incompatibility. Mayo, no doubt, had something to do with it, but the influence was merely the direction given to innate good-breeding.

I spent one of my last nights in Rajputana at Chitore, where the ancestors of X. fell in defence of their country and faith. This huge rib of rock rises abruptly from the plain and stretches a league to east and west. The summit is battlemented, and approached by a great causeway zigzagging up the face of the hill and passing under seven massive gateways. No road on earth has been so steeped in blood.

Swinging up the moonlit path in a howdah, it is impossible not to feel that the place has its genius. The ghosts of men who have loved a plot of earth with any passion must return there; the sentinels are still at the gate, the

guards in the courtyard, the dismounted cavalry line the ramparts. Or if the silent-footed bands of the loyal are not severally here, their sacrifice has at least perpetuated the ideal that inspired their devotion, so that the place where they fell can never be common ground; the spirit of the race is gathered into the stones, and hangs over the deserted fortress like an exhalation. The appeal of the past is so immanent that no true Rajput of the king's blood can dwell in Chitore a night; nor were the princes allowed to visit it.

Years after the city was sacked by Akbar, Sugraji, an apostate of the race, sold himself to the Moguls, and was installed in the ruins while his kinsmen held out in the neighbouring mountains. But the mute eloquence of the stones consecrated by his ancestors' blood wore away a heart hardened against chivalrous instincts: he was eaten with remorse, and restored the old capital to his people. To-day even the ruins of Chitore bring tears to the eyes of bearded horsemen as they go over the ground and recount the old story.

Their fathers held the rock as stubbornly as men will hold to a principle. Three times the flower of the race were annihilated in

its defence, and each time a new breed succeeded them to win it back, while the survivors of the sack held to their mountain fastnesses, laid waste their own rich lands so that they could not harbour a foe, and swore oaths, and kept them, to sleep only on straw till their citadel was restored. Time and fidelity to an ideal always restored it.

The race of Mewar had held Chitore close on six centuries, when it fell before Alla-oo-Din. In the first struggle the chivalry of the day held back the Moslem hordes, while their Rana, who had been treacherously decoyed into the enemy's camp, and Pudmini, the Helen of the occasion, escaped back into the fortress. The event had more than one reminiscence of Troy, for the braves who protected the flight of the queen were conveyed into Alla-oo-Din's camp in the palanquins of her maids of honour, whence they emerged bristling with armour, as did their prototypes of Ilium, though in a more reckless encounter.

In the next investment, when the Moslem had recruited his strength, the Rajputs, who had no new stock to draw from, were overwhelmed. Twelve princes of Mewar first devoted themselves to save the house, — for

the sacrifice was demanded by the guardian of the rock if the line was to be continued —then the women, led by Pudmini and the princesses, passed into an underground sepulchre of flame prepared for their ashes: thousands of them were consumed. The story is confirmed by the Moslem chronicles, nor is it likely that any of them would have survived to dishonour. The Rana and his clansmen put on their saffron robes, the national sign of *combat à l'outrance*, and, throwing open the gates, charged into Alla-oo-Din's host, and fell as they clove a path through the foes; but the heir escaped—so much was purchased of the deity—into the hills, whose caves have always been a womb of retribution to the invader, holding some hidden offspring of the sept guarded tenderly among the wild creatures, and destined to reanimate the race and restore the *gadi* to Chitore.

After a lapse of years the Mewar house returned to the capital, and held it until the invasion of Bahadur of Malwa (1303), when the Rajputs were again overwhelmed. The same princely sacrifice was demanded and made, the same reckless sortie of the clan and holocaust of women. Again an heir escaped, and

the invader entered a city tenanted only by the dead.

A century passed and Akbar's camp was spread before Chitore. Hemmed in and outnumbered by thousands, there was no hope of survival. The walls were breached by mines and artillery, and the Moghul trenches crept up the hill. The Rajputs repeated their deliberate immolation. It was a spectacle tradition demanded of them, and it might have been predicted as infallibly as the report coming after the flash of a gun, or the reply of provoked honour. The royal umbrella swaying to and fro marked the devastating path of the chief, ere he was submerged and extinguished in the host, as an eddy is drawn into a whirlpool. Many of the women fought beside their husbands and sons, preferring the sword to the flame; and their courage was celebrated by the pen of Akbar, whose testimony to the spirit of the race does not fall short of the meed of the Rajput bards. He even caused monuments of the heroes Jeimul and Putta to be raised on each side of the main entrance-gate to the palace at Delhi. Akbar's generous testimony proves that the Rajput chronicles are no empty boast,

and indirectly it makes their legends of an earlier date appear more credible; for it is not likely that these men's forefathers, who, if anything, were more inured to war, were less courageous.

The history of Chitore is the epitome of the history of Rajputana and of Hindu chivalry. Every one who has a chance should spend a day and night there, but he should first read 'The Annals of Rajasthan.' Then he will be able to see Akbar's great beacon, and his camp-fires stretching ten miles before the doomed fortress, and to look beyond into the "lampless" valleys peopled with the dead. On a still moonlight night a peace invests Chitore such as only broods over scenes where great issues have been fought, passions roused and stilled, and a cause given its eternal quietus,—the peace that is only consummated by a sense that every generous resource has been tried and exhausted.

IN A GARDEN AT GYANTSE.

An expedition is a golden field over which memory soars like a hawk in a luxury of sunshine. Folded valleys, burning sand, glittering pinnacles of snow, give way and succeed like fleeting cloud-shadows rifted with sunlit shafts on an April day; and memory floats overhead dreamily absorbed in the pageant until she pitches hawklike on some obscure nook with a spontaneous folding of the wings.

A boy dancer.

It is pleasant to sit on a mountain ledge amidst fragrant pine trees and to watch the kites sweeping over the valley, their shadows pursuing them across the grassy hummocks underneath, and to let one's memory fly as capriciously as they. Far away in the interstices of the hills under the snow are veins of green, the herdsmen's grey houses, a sequestered convent, streaks of purple woodland, veiled now in a haze but visitable to fowls of the air. So folded away in the mind are the scenes of a journey which memory discovers again with a wanton zest.

Something of the unexpectedness of travel is revived in this mental vagabondage. For there is no telling where one is going to alight. Trivial and memorable things lurk and emerge whimsically, and no impression of the physical journey is so faint that it may not be revived. The mountain pipit's nest discovered in a tuft of grass at the foot of a glacier in a silent wilderness 17,000 feet above the sea, the sprig of yellow poppy on a barren cliff, the wisp of the dead man's hair seeking to disengage itself from the skull in a ghoulish eddy of wind, the delicate pink primula springing up between his bony finger-joints clutching at

the sod, the spotted insect rescued from one's soup, the corpse's incredulous face peeping from the sedges of the lake where one was watering one's horse, the torn pieces of a friend's letter floating down the sacred Kyi-chu under the Potala, the wish that he could visualise it in St John's Wood, the group of five mangled by a shell as they were sitting over their barley meal and their silly beaked teapot that alone stood erect,—these things stand not on the order of their recurrence.

At the beginning of the Tibet Expedition a great frost lent its discipline to the troops. We were in winter quarters 15,000 feet above the sea or marching between posts with the transport columns. Icy gales swept down the valleys, freezing the torrents and waterfalls, and we slept in our tents in a temperature of 25° below zero, or in a massive draughty fortress four stories high, half lamasery half castle, in which the dirt of past ages mingled with the smoke of the Yak-dung fire swept gustily through the rooms all day. These conditions lasted for three months and at intervals afterwards, during which time provisions were being poured into Phari on yaks and mules and donkeys and ponies and the descendants

of every beast of burden that entered the ark. That was the first phase of the adventure, which is divided in the mind's map into three parts.

By the end of March the mission and its escort were ready to advance, and no sooner had the force crossed the Tangla (15,000 feet) and entered the inhospitable plateau than the Tibetan army bungled into action with a half-hearted obstinacy that turned the affair into a campaign.

This was the second phase. It began ingloriously with the dismal affray at Guru, when we had to cut down in self-defence several hundred victims of superstition who thought themselves charmed against our bullets and hurled themselves on us with swords and matchlocks, disdaining palaver. It ended with the operations at Gyantse and the storming of the Jong, which called for men of the same mettle as fought at Agincourt. For disparity of arms does not count for much when one is fighting in dark cellars, winding alleys, and gloomy temple stairs where one may be covered from half a dozen windows at almost point-blank range.

Then there was the historic march to

Lhasa, the opening of the gates of romance. For fifty days 91 British officers and 500 warrant- and non-commissioned officers and men could take their evening walk if they chose under the shadow of the Potala. The privilege was valued by few at the time, for to nine men out of ten romance, if it means anything at all, means only remoteness. To these Lhasa was like any other kind of prize, valuable in the difficulty of its attainment, but sadly wanting as an accomplished fact. They will remember it gratefully as a depôt for candles and matches and gritty Chinese cake, sold in crude wooden boxes pasted over with red dragon paper, and regretfully as the camp where the parcel post did not come. But to one or two—and the nature of the enterprise assured that men of the kind would be there — every breath of this rare air was realised as something to be remembered in old age, no doubt "with advantages." Would the curtain be dropped again? I remember wondering; would Lhasa come to mean no more than Pekin or Leh, or would "we happy few" become historical, of almost biblical interest, men who had seen beyond the veil and come back to English firesides with

pictures in our minds that would recur unbidden in the homeliest surroundings and transfigure everything, our own and incommunicable? I hoped no one would ever go to Lhasa again.

Our names are written in brass, so to speak, in that scriptural list. And somewhere in the archives are written the numbers of all the British and native non-commissioned officers and men, rank and file and followers, and even of the mules and ponies that entered the holy city. Let their names be inscribed, and the day they saw the Potala shall "gentle their condition."

The adventure wove a threefold circle round us. In the first place, the scenic grandeur of the march, beneath earth's very giants,—Kinchenjunga, Chumulari, Nichi-Kang-Sang,—through savage places, beside the turquoise waters of the Yam-dak Tso, was unsurpassed in sublimity.

Then an extraordinary human interest attaches to these crags and precipices and cloud-swept deserts. The lamasery, which hangs on the glacier-bitten cliff far removed from warmth and fertility and sunshine, is inhabited by priests who are cut off from

materialism and reason by the unsensualising savagery of their surroundings. Here they spend their lives in prayer and in an elaborate ritual which is the natural growth of the fierce, demon-haunted, elemental wilderness in which they dwell. The beat of their tocsin calling them to prayer echoes the storm blasts of their mountains; the clanging of their discordant trumpets and conch-shells is the shriek of the spirits pent in their ravines; the monotonous drone of the thousand bass voices lifted up as one is the wail of the earth-demon seeking deliverance from the god of the upper air. Climb any mountain of their tableland, sit an hour alone beside the grey chorten on the summit: grey clouds curl round and recede, revealing the titanic work of the gods, in which tumbled chaos one is a shrivelled and attenuated atom. Cast off inherited instincts and the soul shrivels too and is cowed, the mere chattel of the sublime. Strange energies are moving. The grey mist is gathering again and spread with unseen hands over the mountain, obscuring earth and sky. One peers through the curtain; it is impenetrable as the hand that lifted it. One is alone, but spiritually encompassed. There

are voices in the mountain that are unconcerned, eyes in the mist that are unmoved by our plight. Insensibly one is oppressed with the sense of exclusion, the wish to be absorbed. Hence is the conception of Nirvana the protest of man against isolation when he feels that no human effort can appease the malice of the unseen.

On the mountain-top, then, these three materialisations—the implacable rock, the veil of cloud, and the spiritualised substance called man—are alone. After its futile ecstacy the spirit of the last is quelled and sinks into acquiescence, knowing that the aspiration to be intelligibly included in the mysterious system of God is vain. The physical and spiritual parts yield in a kind of fearful resignation. Hands are groping on the ground, and in a mood of devoted abstraction a cairn is built. Stone rises upon stone in vain propitiation. Man has erected in the wilderness a symbol of his presence. He has uttered a cry of loneliness to those heedless unappeasable spirits of the air.

It is easy to understand the superstitious awe of the Tibetans. Instead of spending an hour on the mountain-pass, spend a lifetime

there, and you will be subjugated by the presence of a ruthless power, whose manifestations, whether natural or supernatural, are capricious, inconsiderate, demoniacal. I think every one who went to Lhasa felt that if there were gnomes or genii anywhere on the earth it must be in these savage wildernesses, where every rock and cavern is scored with superstitious emblems.

The Noijins, the gnomes of the peaks and passes, who cause avalanches and breathe out the "la-druk," the poison of the pass,—mountain sickness in our prosaic phrase,—have been seen by our picquets. I came on them once on the lonely Phembu La, where we rode one day on a reconnaissance from Lhasa and looked across the mountain-chain towards Tengri Nor, whither the Dalai Lama had fled on the great northern road to Mongolia. I heard a whistling call and saw grey figures, unsubstantial as mist, hovering round us behind the rocks. I am sure of it now, though a matter-of-fact subaltern said at the time that they were voles and marmots. Anyhow the place was haunted. An hour spent there left a deep impression: a day and night would have unhinged materialism.

I felt an itching of the wrist to grub up stones and build. I am sure that the most unimaginative man would have raised a pyramid of shale before dawn.

But to live and die there and to know that one's ghost must go forth alone amongst those others,—it is the dread of this that inspires Lamaism.

In smooth pasture-lands, amidst sleek grazing cattle and the gentle revolution of the seasons, where crops are lush and silky and nature is kind, one can think of a smooth passage for the soul. But imagine the spirit torn from one in such a place, unsheltered by the body that housed it, a tender thing to be a prey to the malignant spirits. If this half-materialised world is haunted, what terrors must lurk in the unseen! How the passage to a new birth must be ambushed. What demons and furies are lurking to snatch the soul with tusks and claws and fiery talons. So the Lamas drone their counter-spells, frescoe their walls with paintings of the unshriven and tormented souls in need of their prayers, while their frightened flock heap on every protuberance of the earth emblems of propitiation.

To penetrate into these scenes of spiritual

adventure was an experience worth a struggle. But as if there were not romance enough in this remote and mysteriously-haunted land, the jealous preserve of mediævalism guarded from invasion by the most implacable barriers of nature and superstition, it fell to us to fight our way through it mediævally. War in such a theatre was the third of the circles that enchantment wove round us.

It was not the thunder of our cannon in the hills, the shelling of crags 19,000 feet above the sea, or the rushing of caves above the glacier level, that one likes to dwell on, for in the open the Tibetans could not stand up to modern arms. But in their warrens and bolt-holes they fought doggedly under conditions that cancelled the advantages we gained from quick-firing guns.

Much of the fighting round Gyantse was as hot and lively as if we had been opposed by Dervishes and Zulus. Looking back on these encounters is like being carried away by a tale of Harrison Ainsworth or Dumas. There was nothing modern or conventional about them. We fought in cobbled alleys, age-worn keeps, and courtyards overgrown with nettles, and gave and took hard knocks quite in the

approved fashion. Old chain armour was scattered about in heaps in every monastery, and even slings and bows and arrows, and our only regret was that the Tibetans would not wear these trappings. But they did not disappoint us in other ways. The atmosphere was pure Scott, for the people had been asleep for hundreds of years, and we were thrown back into fighting them in their own way. When we crossed their frontier we stepped into the middle ages. It was not until we woke up in civilisation that we realised that we had spent one year of our lives in the sixteenth century, remembering how they would creep up to our walls in a night attack, thrust their matchlocks through our loopholes, and hail us at dawn with a salvo. Then what delightful abandon and disregard of the rules was shown in their habit of discharging twenty cannon at any individual who left the cover of our besieged camp by daylight.

The best part of the Tibet campaign from the soldier's point of view was the house-fighting round Gyantse. At Palla men hacked at one another mediævally, and the Tibetans rained jingall bullets into the *mêlée* from the

fort, careless whether they hit friend or foe. No maxim-tapping and long-range finding, but hot rushes in the dark against steel, and amazing old blunderbusses cocked at the first man round the corner. No subaltern need be ashamed of such a baptism.

The assault often began before dawn. It was evens if the Tibetans were awake when the fuse was laid at the first gateway, but it was odds against the men in the courtyard when we broke in with our Sikhs and Gurkhas through the breach. When the first house was rushed and its garrison killed or captured, we had stirred up a hornet's nest. Tibetans would be lining the roofs of the houses, which were parapeted with sods and brushwood and prayer-wheels curtained with yak-hair. It was difficult to draw a bead on them from the street, though there was generally some stretch of it they could cover, and one had to run the gauntlet through narrow alleys or open courtyards exposed to the fire of persistent though, it must be confessed, not very expert marksmen. Still, the man who lit the fuse was generally hit, or the man who stood by his side.

Follow young Brown for five minutes in

his first experience of war. He has just been knocked down a ladder by a sword-cut across the helmet, and is scrambling up again, when a Sikh Suboder, catching his sleeve, points to the tip of a sword, a bare half inch projecting beyond the passage wall at the top. The two pause and confer in whispers. Then the Sikh creeps up a rung or two, holds his rifle at arm's-length, and fires round the corner. The sword falls, clutched by an inert hand. There is a scramble behind, and the two leap on to the landing. The passage is empty save for a heap on the floor. Shooting is going on in houses all round, but Brown and his knot of men—for three more Sikhs, hearing the shot, have run in from the street to join him—have their own immediate corner to clear. A few yards down the passage to the right are two doors. There may be twenty or more men behind them, perhaps only two or three. Brown stops and whispers again. He takes off his helmet and carries it in his left hand. At the sign his Sikhs doff their pugrees and follow bareheaded. Uncovering makes them look ruffianly. Then there is a self-conscious shuffling of feet, and half a helmet and four pugrees are poked tentatively beyond the

lintel of the door. The manœuvre draws the Tibetans' fire. At the volley the adobe of the passage wall opposite the door falls in a crumbling ruin, as if the place were shelled. The impact clouds the room with dust. The Tibetans have fired their matchlocks, and are shot down or bayoneted as they rush on with swords. Brown is badly cut about the revolver hand; Gurdit Singh has a ricochet bullet in his calf; there is an ugly heap on the floor; and the house is taken. But before leaving some one notices the toe of a blue-and-red woollen boot, with rope soles, protruding from a heap of grain in the corner. I am afraid Gurdit Singh's *bhai* uses his bayonet while Brown's back is turned.

It was all in the day's work if a house had to be taken offhand without the aid of gun-cotton. In a corner of the same street Smith finds himself with a dozen of his men against a strongly barricaded house. There are no sappers to breach it, and men are firing through the door. His Gurkhas begin boring with their bayonets at a weak spot in the wall, and as the breach widens fire into the house; a sword leaps out, and a Gurkha's

right arm falls limp. He is a case for the ambulance. The wall is found to be too strong, so the sturdy little fellows climb on one another's shoulders to the roof and fire into the courtyard. The Tibetans reply, but as their fire becomes more shaky and spasmodic, Smith and Thapa Mewa and nine of his company leap into the court and rush the house. In that *mêlée* the little fellows will not shoot if they can help it. Rifles are well enough in their place, but it is in the quick *kukri* thrust alone, and in the red spurt that leaps from it, that they recognise the true and blissful moments of life.

The house is taken, but other positions are held. Beyond it there are more walls to be breached and courtyards to be rushed, and we have to sap our way through the whole village or monastery as the case may be. By this time an explosive party of Sikh Pioneers has joined Smith's company after wading through a mill-stream exposed to a deadly flank fire of slings and stones and rifle bullets, as well as the great jingall balls which the Tibetans in the Jong have been raining into the *mêlée* all day.

The fusè is laid at the door of the next house. As it explodes a column of dust rises up enveloping everything. Smith and his men close in and rush into the cloud, half-choked and blinded. Right in the gateway Smith collides with a burly Tibetan who is bolting out. As they stagger from the impact Smith shoots his man with his revolver; he brains another who is following close behind, and a third bolts into a granary, whence he is disinterred. All the rest of the Tibetans in the house have taken refuge in an upper storey, and cut down the ladder which leads up to it from the courtyard. A havildar by Smith's side is shot through the head as he is searching for a line of pursuit. Then begins a game of hide-and-seek, our men beneath firing into the upper verandah, the Tibetans above firing into the verandah of the courtyard, both parties circling round and dodging and ducking behind pillars, each man "pinking" whom he can, as quick and alert as a jumpy snipe-shot, and firing at a shadow. At last a ladder is found, and our men take up positions in the courtyard to cover the party that scale it. The first man comes down like a winged duck; the second falls on to the verandah wounded.

But it is enough. The Tibetans are dropping into the street beyond. Few of them escape.

This kind of street-fighting was an almost daily experience with Smith and Brown for a couple of months in Tibet, but they are modest unostentatious boys, and their names do not appear in despatches. Yet it was hot work. On one or two occasions fifty per cent of the British officers engaged were killed or wounded.

In the courtyard Smith meets Major Y., who lifts up a mangled left hand with the thumb hanging loose and a deep gash across the wrist. His face is expanded in a broad smile as he says with a slow drawl, "Isn't this funny?" a remark that voices a very common feeling when men's pulses beat slower after a fight.

Three months afterwards we were back in Gyantse. We had trodden many paths that had never been profaned by the children of progress. We had been to Lhasa and achieved the impossible. The purlieus of that sacred city were familiar to us. We had entered the Jokhang, the holy of holies, and beheld in those dim precincts the sublime image of the

Maitreya,[1] the Buddha of the Hereafter, and gazed on the sacred vessels of gold and the jewelled relics that sparkled behind the grille. We had seen the white mice play about the feet of the Lamas of Palden Lhamo. We had circumambulated the Lingkor, groped our way round the devil's altar at Ramoché connected by an abysmal cavern with hell, attended a commination service held by the sorcerers of Moru, and we had signed the treaty in the sacred palace of the earthly incarnation of Avalokiteswara, and we were coming back just as a second winter was binding the high plateau in its glacis of ice.

The Lhasa column had entered Gyantse in the morning, and been welcomed uproariously by the good fellows who had been left behind. For three months we had been short of tobacco and all kinds of stores. Drink of course had been put out of mind, and a slice of cake dropped on the mess table might have provoked a breach of the peace. But Gyantse was the terminus of the parcel post, and all these good things had been accumulating for weeks, so that it took a whole day to distribute them to members of the force. After an absurdly elaborate meal, four of us—the Boy,

the Ballad, the Hired Assassin,[1] and myself—made off to a garden with some of the spoil, a tin of Craven mixture, a flask of wine, and a bundle of English illustrated papers and magazines. It is odd that this episode should occur so often in the pageant of scenes over which memory sweeps on the road between Siliguri and the Potala.

"Man is a sensual beast," I said as I watched my friend fill his pipe and drain his flask with a bacchanalian relish. We called him the "Hired Assassin" because he wore his tunic frivolously.

"Make yourself easy, old man," he said. "You and I do not really care for these things."

We were interrupted by a growl from the Boy, who had unearthed an article on Tibet in one of the illustrated papers.

"Have the nonconformists been on their hind legs again?"

[1] The Boy, the Ballad, and the Hired Assassin are, of course, only embodiments of points of view often met with in the force. The talk in the garden must not be taken as the abstract of any actual conversation. It is a convenient epitome of views that were expressed at different times during the expedition. The wagtail, the ruined fort, the bundle of maroon rags are true, both in the literal and poetical sense.

"Just a little—'Battues and Butchery in Tibet'; 'Cowardly massacre at Gyantse'; 'Deterioration of the British army'; 'Priests murdered at the altar.' That was the Johnny you shot at Naini."

"Maybe," said the Hired Assassin. "He was too big to squeeze behind the idol in the niche. The beast had been peppering us all the afternoon, and picked off old Sundar Singh just as he got inside the gate."

"A pity the editor of 'This Planet' wasn't in the show to give our deteriorated army a lead up to the breach."

He pointed to the ruined keep of Gyantse, an isolated rock in the plain, walled and bastioned with defences from foot to summit. These were partly demolished, but the naked shell-torn walls stood forlornly above the wreckage of the fallen gateway. Up that bare and precipitous rock-face Grant and his Gurkhas crawled on hands and knees. They were exposed to heavy fire from the bastions, and an avalanche of stones which swept man after man down the cliff, carrying with them others who were crawling up behind. Grant was hit and rolled down thirty feet, but scrambled up again in spite of his wound and

was first into the breach, Humphreys and Franklin and Baldwin and their jolly men coming on in single file behind.

In the eyes of the men in the plain the little caterpillar band was doomed. The Tibetans had only to stand aside and shoot them one by one as their heads appeared in the opening. But the very gallantry of it cowed them. What in the name of all their Buddhas could they do against men like these? As the first white hand clutched the masonry, the defenders, who had stood up all day against a very hell of rifle and shell and maxim fire, turned and fled as if their gods had deserted them.

It was this assault which broke the heart and resistance of the Tibetans. The Jong was the Key of Tibet; they had bombarded us from it with ignominy for seventy days. My companions had all been involved in the attack in a greater or less degree. Their thoughts naturally turned to it, for we were picnicing on the ground where they had taken cover.

It was a perfect noon in October, and we lay stretched on the grass in the sunshine, spied upon by hoopoes and half-tame magpies whose

clumsy nests hung in the fragile willows and poplars. A few withered seed-stalks were all that remained of the irises and primulas that carpeted the place in June. The travellers' joy was relinquishing its last feathery seed-balls. Overhead the trees wore an autumnal gold. A little wagtail with a white diamond shaft on his head and a red tail came out to inspect us, and stayed, concluding that we were humane.

"I shot a man just behind that tree," said the Boy. "If his fuse had been all right he would have had me first. As it was, he hacked a chunk out of my rifle."

It was an atmosphere of perfect peace in which battle was as hard to imagine as warmth in Phari Jong. We think of war unconcernedly in squadrons, the bare plain, the panorama, the diagrammatic map. Here the shock of it is grand, but there are scenes in which it won't bear thinking about.

Instead of conjuring up a kind of magnified parade-ground, consider the action in units. The front may extend two or three miles, but in one corner there is a garden and a farm and a byre in which the milch cow nosing the goodman of the house an

hour before dawn bade him an unconscious farewell. The daughter and wife fled over the hills in the night. Half an hour ago the goodman was a volunteer in the opposite firing-line in the poplar clump over the valley, but his work is done. A dozen soldiers are lying behind the nasturtium pots in his garden, and one is detaching a yellow trumpet-flower that has caught in the sight of his rifle. The "small tortoiseshell" butterflies which his daughter chased a week ago are playing over the smooth dark barrels of their Lee-Metfords.

The men in the garden are pawns in a political game. They have no grudge against the goodman until they come to grips with him. The young subaltern's thoughts are far away. Those small tortoiseshells hovering over the nasturtium flowers have recalled a holiday when he was at a private school and used to chase butterflies with a little long-legged girl called Enid.

An old army Chaplain tells a story in 'L'Orme du Mail' of the French lines at St Privat, where "un grand diable de sapeur" brought him a sack of potatoes every day from the enemies' lines. They were given him by a

soldier in a German picquet. The two were neighbours on the frontier. They embraced and spoke of parents and friends, and the German said, "Tu peux prendre des pommes de terres tant que tu voudras." "This simple incident," said l'Abbé Lalande, "made me realise more than any reasoning how unjust and cruel war is."

That is the pathetic side. It was uppermost in the mind of the Hired Assassin, and that is why he could not take his profession seriously. He had used the horrid phrase at mess and it had stuck to him. If he had been in "a show" where the national honour was jeopardised, he would have made a keen enough soldier.

The Boy was a young barbarian with a vein of softness in him, which principle had hardened into savagery. He was more afraid of its emergence than of anything else.

"This is rather rich," he said, and he held up a radical paper that owes a great deal of its popularity to its constant belittlement of our troops. "Here is a rag squealing because we killed men in the pursuit. I wish we had killed a few more. As if we could afford to spare men who have been shooting at us all

day and throw down their guns when they are overtaken with reprisals."

"The M.I. took scores of prisoners," said the Hired Assassin.

"If I'd been with them they wouldn't have taken so many," said the Boy. "The only chance I had was a Lama who bolted out of a house we had been storming and tried to drown himself in two feet of water. I pinked him with my revolver as my pony jumped the ditch. He thought he was concealed or I wouldn't have shot. That's the humour of it."

"Water, water, flowing red," quoted the Ballad.

The Boy had not forgiven himself for sparing a man who pretended to be wounded. It was after Dzama Tang.

"Now, what would you have done in my case?" he said. "The fellow fired point-blank at me from behind a rock, but he missed fire. His fuse didn't light or something, and he fell down writhing and groaning as if he had been hit in the tummy; but I had him stripped and there wasn't a mark, and I was too damned soft to shoot him."

"Couldn't have done it. It wasn't Geneva, as Sergeant Smith says."

But the Boy didn't see it. "War is a hard game," he thought, "and I must drive all damned nonsense out of my head if I am going to be any use to my Country." And he went about it conscientiously.

"I don't think this white handkerchief business is playing the game," the Boy went on. "We were taking a kopje in South Africa, and the Boers lay tight and let us have it hot all the way up. We lost ten men in my own company. When we got to the top, one of these skunks fired the last cartridge in his magazine point-blank at a corporal and shot him dead. Then he jumped up and began waving his dirty rag. As luck would have it, Private Brown emerged on the ridge just as Corporal Green fell at his feet.

"'I am sorry, but you are for it,' he said, and bayoneted the man on the spot. He had seen three of his pals rolled over in the dust on the way up."

"That was quite human," I said.

Even the Assassin admitted the justice of it.

"Did you hear Harbans Singh's yarn of how he and Ghulam Ali shot sixteen men in a garden? They were fired on as they were

going through with a convoy and lost a Havildar, two mules, and a Dravie. They had shot fifteen, he says, and they were looking about for another when Ghulam Ali came on a drain under a faggot bridge. 'This is just the place I would hide in,' he said, 'if I were running away,' and he dug his bayonet through the faggots into the nether limbs of the sixteenth. He did not know there was any one there till he felt his butt end wriggling in his hands like a rod with a fish on the end."

"I hope some one put the poor devil out of his pain."

"Yes, his head came out the other side."

"Now supposing this man was wearing a long frock-coat and a pot hat," said the Hired Assassin. "How would it alter the ethics of it? Supposing he were the editor of 'This Planet.'"

"Justifiable homicide," said the Ballad.

The Ballad was a boy of twenty. His chin was guiltless of a hair. The hair of his head and his eyebrows were almost white. His eyes were willow-pattern blue, and they were fixed far away on some spiritual crusade. He cared for nothing but fighting, and he seldom

spoke more than once a-day. When he did it was to quote some martial poet with an abandon of his customary reserve that shocked one like the speech of Balaam's ass.

"Frock-coats and the elemental passions somehow don't mix," said the Hired Assassin. "To bring them into contact would be the refinement of savagery."

"'Pallida mors æquo pede pulsat,'" quoted the Ballad.

"Urbanas sedes et tabernas barbarorum," interpolated the Assassin. "Certainly, but give each his favourite kind of demise. Physic one in his bed and bayonet the other in the drain."

True, I thought, and when they are dead wrap one in a smart coffin and put him in a glass case with sham flowers and carry him to the grave with all sorts of pretentious mummery. And bury the other simply in the ground, or burn him on faggots, or cut him up into slices and feed the pensioners.

Which is better? Naked simplicity, earth to native earth, to face the clay, or to wrap ourselves up like our corpses in a dozen protective layers of sentiment and illusion through which death peeps the more repul-

sively. Give me a soldier's funeral in the desert.

War is always an ugly business, especially when one is armed with a magazine rifle against a matchlock or a Lhasa-made martini, but I think in Fleet Street the horror of it is exaggerated. I fancy that the journalist eating his steak at the Cock looks up at his neighbour, when he hears the newsboy call out "Terrible massacre in Tibet, five hundred Tibetans butchered," and imagines a deep red gash beneath the neatly parted hair and sees a horrid trickle on his white shirt front. He makes the mistake of thinking that the Oriental minds fighting as much as he does, and dwells on death with as great a fear. He translates the nervous atmosphere of the street with the policeman round the corner to countries where men look on long life as a phenomenon, and goes back to his desk with an acute attack of neurosis, with which he infects a large section of the reading public the next morning. Meanwhile the man on the spot sees the dead lying in their garden of marigolds and hollyhocks, and remembers that only an hour or two before they had been playing dice and dominoes with peach-

stones. He knows that they have lost in a greater game in which he too staked his life.

An exclamation from the Ballad interrupted my musings. He had become restless, and was examining something between a walnut tree and the garden wall.

"Here is your man," he called to the Boy. And there he was, in a bundle of maroon rags, half concealed in the bushes. He had escaped burial, but the pensioners had done their work, having first rent the garments. The Boy turned him over gently with his foot as one examines a stag. There was no bone in the breast to show where the bullet had entered, but there was a clean perforation in the spine and the dried skin that attached to it.

"Middle stump," said the Boy. "Poor beggar! But it's all in the day's march. If his fuse had gone off it would have been me."

Attached to the bone that had been his neck we found a little square amulet box packed with sacred grain, a minute image of a god in clay, and a paper charm with which he had purchased immunity from death.

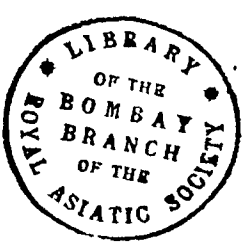
The Ballad quoted abstractedly a stanza of Austin Dobson's "Before Sedan."

The Boy eyed him disapprovingly, as much as to say "Don't yap."

"How they shrink," he said; "I thought he was twice the size."

But the Ballad was far away. He was thinking of the house fighting, and dwelling on it fondly as a renewal of those old-world bouts in which men saw one another's eyes as they gave and took death.

Somehow, whenever I give memory wing over this field of Tibet, into whatever ghoulish mist-ridden mountain recesses I may be borne, I find myself in the end in the garden at Gyantse on that peaceful, uneventful, October afternoon with my three friends, in the presence of that bundle of maroon rags, and the confidential little black wagtail with the white diamond shaft on his head and the red tail.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THE SUNDARBANS.

THE great delta of the Ganges east of the Hughli, from Diamond Harbour as far as the Haringhata, is entirely river and jungle. Four thousand square miles of forest are intersected by six hundred or more channels which are big enough to have names on a 4-inch-to-the-mile survey map, and perhaps ten times as many channels which have escaped nomenclature, and yet are big enough for a ship's jolly-boat, though the trees

"High overarched embower."

The Forest Department have divided this huge tract into many thousands of sections, and each section when it has been depleted of its timber is left alone for forty years. These statistics are more eloquent of the stillness and tranquillity of the Sundarbans than any descriptive writing.

There is a sameness about all great rivers which makes a few days on a launch more monotonous than a month in the open sea, where strange fellowship and a clean horizon give one a spurious sense of freedom, and even of conquest. But in estuaries the yellow water and the glare and the far-away fringe of trees are always the same, whether in the Menam, the La Plata, or the Hughli. Here breadth of view affects us, not illogically, with a sense of restraint, and it is good, if one has command of the wheel, to escape from the estuary which makes us feel confined through its perpetual vista of limitations and the suggestion of unexplored margins, which may or may not have a character of their own, into channels where one can recognise the vegetation on either bank.

In the Sundarbans these give place to narrower channels, which in turn are connected by creeks barely accessible in a dinghy, every one of which reveals the same feature—a low bank of mud haunted by the slothful mugger, and overrun by red and brown crabs and mud-fish always plying between one another's burrows on the same earnest business of love or hate or greed, and making

assignations as resolutely and disastrously as more evolved creatures. The banks are slotted with the feet of unseen things, tiger and cheetal, the hunter and hunted, which move in some mysterious way through the thick tangle, which is so congested that the roots have to send up shoots for air,—brittle, slimy things that crackle under the foot of the intruder.

Seeds fall all day long, and germinate at once in the mud, and spring up and choke one another, and writhe and struggle for light and room. The banks are thick with the fern-like *hental* palm, whose leaves turn golden, and the *golpatta*, that sends up great palmate fronds which are always tumbling over with their own weight, leaving a *débris* of roots broken off and sticking in the mud like inverted clubs glistening red and yellow in the attenuated sunlight, until they are lifted out of their bed of slime by the rising tide and borne through a labyrinth of fronds out into the broad stream seawards.

Could one cut a path through this teeming forest one would find there was no truce or respite in it till the jungle ends right in the sea, where the matted red roots of the *goran*

and mangrove are left naked by the breakers in a ruddy tortuous tangle that is like nothing on earth but the dwarf rhododendron forests of Sikkim and Nepal.

Yet in some places on the coast, known only to the "Jungly Sahib" and the shell-gatherers, the forest which keeps its secret so darkly opens into more communicative glades. Through the sunken land, where the dying and stag-headed *sundri* puts out branches covered with fungi and the green orchid-like parasites, there penetrates an unexpected glimmer of sky. Here the mud ends, and the *sundri* and *keora* trees drop their seeds in unresponsive soil.

Along the coast extend the sand-dunes, a line of smooth breast-like hummocks and soft depressions, where the tiger stretches himself and sleeps after his hunting. The barrier is grown over with the tall elephant-grass, whose white crests, always stirring with a faint breeze from the sea, dance and glimmer like a mirage. Between the dunes and the jungle lies the salt marsh, the stag's pasture-land, where the grass stretches in streaks of colour from citron green to dull brown according to the variation of the soil. The marsh is intersected all over by a maze of deer tracks, as beaten as footpaths

leading through homely meadows to a farm. Here I have watched the herds step warily into the glade at dawn.

The features which give the glade its threefold charm make it a perilous place for the herd. Inland, along the definite line where the sand forbids encroachment, stands a resolute bank of *keora* trees; towards the coast stretches the shimmering line of dunes, and between these barriers the variegated grass land is broken here and there by natural dykes fringed by the alder-like *gingwa*. When the breeze is to the land, man or tiger may stalk along the edge of the forest; when to the sea, they may lurk in the cover of the sand-dunes where the elephant-grass and the murmuring of the breakers conspire with them against the herd; when it blows along the coast, they still have the shelter of the *gingwa* bushes which divide the glade into a hedged pasture-land. So when my forest friend took me to the place one still October dawn, we got within murderous distance of herd after herd, but spared them all save a young buck, for we were a week or more too late, and there was not a stag in the herd out of velvet.

Another morning the glades were deserted.

A slight stir of wind from the land made us keep to the sand-dunes. The sun had barely risen, but we saw by their fresh tracks that a great herd of cheetal had been stampeding across the marsh. Presently we came across the fresh spoor of a tiger, which explained the desolation. Then we learned in the school of a master stalker. We followed him up, keeping stealthily to the hollows as he had done, rounding every hummock, and only peering into the glade where the elephant-grass was thickest. We soon came to the spot where he had sprung and missed his kill. The sand was churned up angrily, and beyond the scurrying deer had left a thin beaten path like a sheep-track. My friend, the Jungly Sahib, whispered to me a wager that the beast would break cover where B——, a dilettante who had come out "to eat the air," as Ram Bux says, was sitting in meditation a hundred yards from the Lascar who was carrying his gun. This was what actually happened. The two confronted each other. B—— stood his ground, and the tiger turned contemptuously away with unnecessary discretion. We followed him up to the edge of the sunless *goran* jungle, which he entered

foiled of his prey after as fruitless a stalk as ours.

It is only through such casual encounters that tigers are shot in this part of the Sundarbans. The Jungly Sahib had shot many elsewhere, where he had had to work hard for them, and even B——, the Laodicean, had shot two or three in Burma. But in this jungle blind chance is the only shikari. My friend had been a year in the district, and many a night he had beaten silently along the *khals* (small channels) in his canoe watching every *chur* (silted sand-bed) and promontory expectantly, but never in the *khals* or in the open glades, which, by the way, were far from his beat and seldom visited by him, had the moment been predestined in which he and

"The two confronted each other."

a full-grown tiger should cross paths. He had shot one swimming across a broad channel, but it had sunk and did not appear again. And another time he had found three young tiger-cubs in a bush near the sand-dunes, which paddled about and tumbled over one another in such an innocent and winning manner that he had not the heart, even if he had the opportunity, to leave them motherless. We saw the bush and the half-grown tracks that very morning. There was no spoor of the mother anywhere about, so we gathered that they had come to years of discretion.

But our turn was to come. We had bathed in the sea, breakfasted, and turned into our bunks for a deserved rest after a five-hours' tramp in the sun, when we were awakened by the cry of "*Sher*." The launch stopped, and we saw a dark object pacing among the *keora* trees on a spit of land where a *khal* ran into the main channel. A canoe was lowered at once, and we rowed to shore. We had no time to put on boots or any clothing more elaborate than is generally worn in a hot-weather siesta in the Sundarbans. Yet in spite of, perhaps because of, our informal costume the tiger seemed more curious than

alarmed. He walked slowly away parallel with the tributary *khal*, and stopped every now and then to look behind. We were nearly level with him when the Jungly Sahib got his chance and put in a shot. The jungle hid the sequel, but we heard a groan, and landed cautiously where the tiger was last seen. We followed him up on our hands and knees in the soft mud. The undergrowth became so thick that we could not see farther in front of us than a tiger could spring; nor could we move our rifles quickly to left or right without entangling them, and so leaving ourselves exposed to a flank attack. It seemed wiser to turn back — but the blood everywhere, especially on the brushwood three feet from the ground, was profuse and continuous, and the great likelihood of finding him dead tempted us a little farther and a little farther. We had not gone far when we saw the dull glow of his coat a few yards ahead. We covered him simultaneously, but he was beyond offence, a bulk of inert strength lying as still as a stone, and as dead.

The Lascars bound his feet and carried him laboriously to the boat. His great head looked noble and untroubled. But as they lowered

him to the ground the face rolled over towards us, and the paws, tied together with a feeble bit of string, fell by his jowl in a helpless and pathetic way, giving him the air of a suppliant, which he had never worn in life. A soft paw grazed one of the Lascars, and he leapt aside dramatically, then turned on the beast and struck him, not savagely, but with a studied irony and a pretence of surprise that one who had fallen so low should be so greatly daring. He followed the blow with a kick and the long-drawn exclamation, "Ahhyee! Brother. Would you dare!"

In that forest sixty wood-cutters of his own faith fall to the tiger every year.

AMRITSAR.

"The Sikhs of Govind shall bestride horses, and bear hawks upon their hands,
The Toorks who behold them shall fly,
One shall combat a multitude,
And the Sikh who thus perishes shall be blessed for ever."
—*The Tunkha Namch of Guru Govind.*

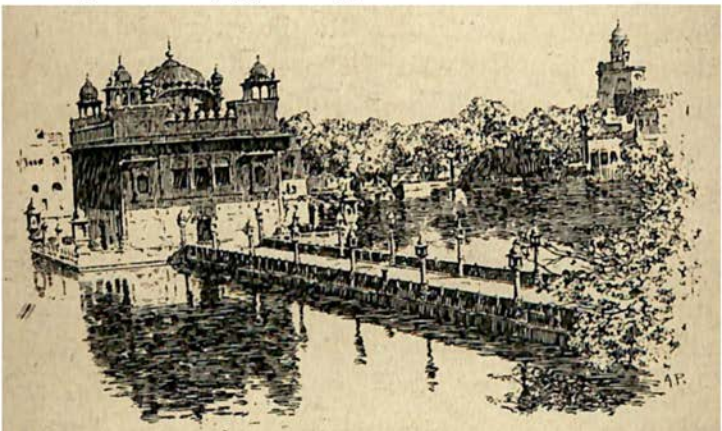
THE man who finds himself free in Bengal in the month of October will anticipate the cold weather, if he is wise, by taking the train north. In a night he will have left the clammy steaminess of the Ganges Delta. At noon on the second day the Punjab mail will carry him into Amritsar. Many hours before this he will have passed out of the country of the subject races into an area where their passive destinies have been decided. Travelling north one notices the difference in the buildings. Towards the Ganges' mouth houses are built merely for shelter, with doors and windows as in pacific countries,

where no one thinks of resisting an invader. In the Punjab houses are built more guardedly. The dead walls on the outside have hardly a chink to let in daylight. Such windows as there are open into an inner courtyard. There are no side doors, and the front one is as stubborn as the yeoman who holds it. Many of the villages and all the old cities are walled and fortified.

From days before Alexander the Punjab has been possessed by the best horsemen and swordsmen that have come through the passes. Scythians, Greeks, Persians, Turks, Afghans have over-ridden the country, despoiled it, and ridden away. The Sikhs are the only Cis-Himalayan[1] folk who have become masters of the soil and held it for any length of time; and Amritsar, "The Lake of Immortality," was the focus of all the sanguinary struggles they carried on with the forces of Islam from the days of Har Govind until the ascendancy of Ranjit Singh. The Durbar Sahib, the present temple, has been destroyed three times. It has been polluted with cow's blood, and the

[1] The Jats, from whom the majority of the Sikhs spring, have been identified with the Scythians. They have been established in India since about 100 B.C.

site heaped with pyramids of the heads of the faithful. Each time the Sikhs retaliated as soon as they were strong enough by destroying the Muhammadan mosques and rinsing the floors with the blood of swine. It can easily be understood that there is no building in the Punjab of any great age.



The Golden Temple, Amritsar.

The Durbar Sahib, or Golden Temple, as we call it, stands now as it was rebuilt soon after it was destroyed by the Afghan, Ahmed Shah, in 1762, only with additions. The story of its making, its disappearances and recrudescences, is, of course, the history of the Sikhs in abstract. During the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries it needed strong defences. That it has stood since 1775 means that the Sikhs have been in the ascendant from this date until they fought the British in 1846 after the death of Ranjit Singh. For all that, they built it as men who needed a wall behind their backs.

The temple rises from an artificial lake of green water, in which the placid reflection of its marble walls and gilded roof and cupolas rests dreamily all day. It is approached by a marble causeway. The walls are inlaid with cornelian and mother-of-pearl, and the doors are sheathed in silver. Iron and brass are "nothing accounted of" in the temple. The tank is 500 feet in length and in breadth. The pavement round it is of marble, 30 feet broad, and is enclosed on three sides by the Bangas, or hostels, which open into it. These belong to the different Sikh chiefs, and are used by them and their retainers when they visit Amritsar. The Ramgharia Banga on the east has two towers where the watchmen kept a look-out for the enemy. For the Durbar Sahib is a soldier's shrine.

One may stand in the gallery on the second storey of the temple and watch the file of worshippers approach along the marble causeway

through the Darshani Darwaza, or Gate of Adoration, and from the same spot one may look down on the Granth Sahib within and see the offerings made to the holy book, and read the spirit of a creed in the faces of the worshippers.

The Granth rests on a low stand, the Manjhi Sahib, and is covered with wrappings of silk, and protected from the offerings of pigeons by a silk awning above. Behind it sits the Granthi, a priest of the old type, grey-bearded, keen-eyed, with an oval face, and an old-fashioned turban lying flat on the head in coils. As in the Hindu temples, men, women, and children drift in a stream towards the priest, throw offerings of flowers, sugar, or copper coins on the object of veneration, and receive consecrated ones in return. All coin of the realm, in silver or gold, is sonorously announced, dropped in a jar before the book, and withheld for temple funds. All unvalued things receive the currency of sanctity by contact with the Granth, and are passed on to newcomers. The Sikh offerers approach with the respect that well-bred men bear to a temporal lord, with a certain love and a certain ease withal. There is less awe than in Hindu

temples, because there is less superstition. In the place of distorted images and emblems there is the holy book. The temple is called the Durbar Sahib, because the ceremony is a Durbar in the literal sense of the word. The book is carried to the shrine with all circumstance and pomp. It is the deputy, or vicar, of the Gurus who have passed away, and the disciples approach in an unending stream to pay honour to their lord.

One is struck most with the gentlemanliness of it all—there is no other word for it. In Anglo-Indian slang the place would be called "a Sahib's temple." One is not dunned, or jostled, or insulted, or fawned upon there as one is at Benares or Brinda Ban or Lashkar, or the temple of Kali in Calcutta, where a mob of brazen-tongued, cadging, ill-conditioned, noisily-extortionate rascals surround one's carriage before one is a hundred yards from the gate, and are allowed by the temple authorities to palm themselves off as priests. Instead there is a rich simplicity in this as in all Sikh shrines. The Gurus abhorred idols, priestcraft, ritual, superstition, tamperings with the supernatural, and all attempts to localise, personify, or insist upon special attributes or

manifestations of the divine being. The highest building in the precincts of the place is a nine-storied monument to the opposite idea. The Baba Atal is an elegy in stone to the son of the sixth Guru, who was chid by his father for restoring a playmate to life. "Two swords cannot be put in one scabbard," his father said, and bade the boy set his heart on pure living rather than vain meddling and display. The boy made good his mistake as well as he could by lying down on the spot and giving up the ghost. It would have been better if he had laid violent hands on himself like a man of ordinary passions; for the record is marred by that commonest of human weaknesses, the boast by inference. Anyhow, that was the Sikh attitude towards miraculous pretensions. The whole story is illustrated in frescoes on the entrance-gate to the shrine.

All through the day the worshippers flock to the Granth. There is no service from the time of the short reading, when the book is borne in on a palanquin an hour before dawn, until the evening prayer. Only the musicians are constantly in attendance, singing hymns to the rebeck and the lute. These are the Rababis, the descendants of the Muhammadan

fakir, Mardana Mirasi of Merawat, who loved Nanak, and set his hymns to music nearly five hundred years ago. As Mardana sat by Nanak's side and ministered to him, yet kept his own faith, so his family have made music for the Gurus or for their deputy, the Book, these five hundred years, and served the Khalsa and held to Islam through generations, when to be a Sikh meant to slay "a Toork" at sight or be slain by him. What were these Muhammadans doing in the shrine? I asked. When I was told they were the children of Mardana, I understood.

One meets diverse races in this catholic shrine. In the throng of worshippers there are many who are drawn there by curiosity, or the off-chance that Nanak may have been the one man to whom God divulged his secret, just as careful men keep rubbish of odd kinds in the hope that one day it may help them in some unforeseen need. As Amritsar is the Indian market for Central Asia, the crowd is diversified by many weather-beaten folk, merchants and muleteers, their red faces seamed with the wind, who have come in across the Himalayas with their caravans from Kashgar, or Yarkand, or far Bokhara. They go about

in wedge-like flocks, happy as most migrants and laughing at everything, one of them always in the van to pilot the rest with some kind of jargon that can be understood. I met a party who had come in the day before from Yarkand. They told me they had made the journey in fifty days, with other cheerful tidings, which I could only interpret as such by their becks and smiles. On their heels followed a mendicant of the Oghar sect, with an empty skull in his hand, from which he professed to drink, making capital out of the vulgar by playing upon their sense of the grotesque, a species of tomfoolery that the old Gurus would have abhorred. Another anomalous interloper wore trousers and a black coat. He called me "mister" in a rasping voice, and I turned away, thinking him a tout. But the fellow persisted until he had delivered himself of his story in the "favour" he had to ask me, which was to tell him in what safe bank he might deposit his hoard. He turned out to be a transmogrified Sikh of Multan, returned after fifteen years in the Australian gold mines. Like the Ancient Mariner, he stopped men to impart his tale. He wished them to know that he had crossed

the sea, dug on equal terms with white men, and "made a bit." A human instinct after all.

Next a jolly Tibetan and his wife shambled along the causeway, as if they were treading over rocks and snow. I greeted him, and he replied with a grin that displayed all his molars, as much as to say, "Isn't it a joke that odd folk like you and me should meet here of all places in the world!" And he laughed, making the place echo with his cracked-bell voice, tuned to the wilderness, as he told me how he had come down from Leh with merchandise by the Kangra valley through much snow, and was picking up any merit that might be had for the asking on the way.

All this palaver took place on the pavement outside the shrine, and must have been audible within. Meanwhile Sikh soldiers and fanatic Akalis passed by, all stamped with the dint of the ideal that Guru Govind left them, an air that one cannot mistake or describe, or explain away by any common heritage of blood, for they are sprung from many castes, Khattris, Brahmins, and Muhammadan converts, but most of all from the hard Jat yeoman, from whom they differ just by the

Guru's mark. For it has been well said that this great man left his impress not only on the minds but on the features of a nation.

In the Durbar Sahib, the centre of Sikh worship and tradition, I hoped to gain some insight into the influence that has marked these people and knit them into the community which fought against us with such splendid courage at Ferozeshah, Aliwal, and Sobraon. One expects a vein of bigotry in a crusader; but the Sikhs have no very positive theological convictions. They do not believe more or less than the religious-minded man with no particular tenets all the world over. Guru Nanak, the founder of the religion, was the declared enemy of superstition. He only sought to remove the cobwebs that had overgrown sectarian conceptions of God. His is expressed in the first words of the Sikh morning prayer:—

> *God is one, His name is true, He is the Creator, without fear, without enmity, Timeless Being, Formless, has never come in a womb, is self-existing, great, and merciful.*"

That is a creed to which the enlightened Buddhist, Muhammadan, Pantheist, and the

religious-minded white man who does not go to church might all subscribe without feeling that there is any need to enter the lists about it. Guru Nanak insisted on his human origin and weakness. He tried to unite Hindus and Muhammadans in a simple attitude of reverence to the one God, stripping off ritual, idols, perverted asceticism, caste, all kinds of bigotry and dogma, and boasts of revealed truth and the intercessions of the Prophet. His spiritual policy was tolerance, which, of all the religious cries that have ever been raised, might well seem the least likely to inspire a Church and State militant.

One must look further for the secret of Sikhism. The Khalsa love the faith because it is of the brotherhood, not the brotherhood because it is of the faith. Religion is only one link in the chain that has welded them together. Sikhism was a quiet growth. Guru Nanak never drew sword, neither did the second, nor the third, nor the fourth, nor the fifth Guru. When Har Govind, the sixth Guru, armed his followers, it was to avenge his father, who was killed by the Muhammadans. That was the beginning of the struggle between the Sikhs and Islam.

A peculiar creed, even if it is a negative one, must always breed a spirit of clannishness, which in time becomes stronger than the motive that gave birth to it. Even tolerance becomes a contempt for intolerance, and is only another name for intolerance itself. So in Har Govind's time we find the quietists that Nanak founded mounted and armed with a very urgent temporal cause. Religion received more support from the cause than it lent it. Nanak has been compared to Luther, but his followers did not fight on Lutheran principles. Thousands of Jat yeomen joined the banner under the sixth Guru to throw off the Muhammadan yoke, but it would be misleading to say that they were inspired with the spirit of the Reformation. Rather, they accepted the book with the sword.

Under the seventh and eighth Gurus the Sikhs made little progress. The ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, who seems to have been a religious freebooter, was put to death by the Moghul Emperor at Delhi, and his assassination gave an extraordinary impetus to the cause. His son, Guru Govind, the tenth and last of the line, was a born leader of men. The bearded martial Sikh whom we know to-

day, and who has endeared himself to us on the field, was Govind's creation. Good old Nanak could not have foreseen him even in his most adventurous dreams. Yet, if the old man could rise from his grave, now inundated by the Ravi, at Dehra Nanak, and be confronted by his own spiritual descendant, the Govindi Sikh, he could not but admire the breed, remote as the idea of it must have been from his own mind, and shocking as it would have been in certain respects to his sense of fitness.

When Tegh Bahadur was murdered, Govind nursed his own rage and diverted the resentment of his followers into channels where it gathered force. He bided his time, and expanded his faith to meet the political conditions of the age, and in the process refined rather than degraded it. Before he struck at Islam he had inspired his cause with the glamour of a crusade. He had an eye, or a heart rather, for those emblems which strengthen a people, because they minister most to prestige. So he instituted the Khalsa, or the commonwealth of the chosen, into which his disciples were initiated by the ceremony of *pâhal*, or baptism by steel and

"the waters of life." He abolished caste, and ordained that every Sikh should bear the old Rajput title of Singh, or Lion, as every Govindi Sikh does to this day. He also gave national and distinctive traits to the dress of his people, ordaining that they should carry a sword and a dagger, don breeches instead of the loin-cloth, and wear their hair long and secured in a knot by a comb. He wrote the 'Dasama Padshah Ka Granth,' or the 'Granth of the Tenth King,' in which he grafted the principles of valour, devotion, and chivalry on the humble gospel of Nanak; and he introduced the national salutation, "Wah Guru ji ka Khalsa! Wah Guru ji ka Futteh,"[1] which is chanted by the Sikhs now as they meet in the street, or as they step out on a day's march, or enter the battlefield. All these things gave the Sikhs cohesion and a separate nationality, and were the beginning of traditions that are still strong.

When Guru Govind inaugurated the sacrament of steel he proved himself a wise and far-sighted leader. For of all material things which genius has inspired with spiritual sig-

[1] "Hail to the Khalsa of God! Victory to God!"

nificance steel is the truest and most uncompromising. Let humanitarians prate as they will, there never has been a race who have not been purged and refined by it. In some it is the only combater of grossness and the monster of self. To the Khalsa it gave a cause and welded them into a nation; and in the dark days of Muhammadan rule in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Sikh was slain at sight and no quarter was given, it drove them on those gallant crusades in which they rode to Amritsar in the dead of night, leapt into the sacred tank and out again, and galloped back through the enemies' lines purified. Hundreds were slain, but not one abjured his faith or perjured his soul to preserve "his muddy vesture of decay." Compare as emblems the steel bracelet of the Sikhs and the Lingam Yoni of Siva, and you have a standard of ideals, a fair gauge of how Sikhism has tempered the Jat.

Govind Singh died in 1708. A hundred years afterwards his followers, under Ranjit Singh, held the North of India from the Sutlej to Peshawur. Upon the death of that astute old chief the Khalsa were unwise enough to attack the British, and it was not until they had

fought two campaigns with us—in which every battle was hardly contested—that they accepted defeat. Since those days the Sikhs have been our most loyal allies: they held by us in the Mutiny, and they now form the most substantial part of our Indian Army.

In the old days before Ranjit Singh the Sikhs were all horsemen. The infantry only existed to garrison forts or to follow the cavalry on foot until they succeeded to a horse or looted one. Like the Rajputs and Muhammadans, the old Sikh soldiers never endured infantry service gladly. They were too proud to go on foot while others rode, and they had not the patience for it. The Sikh ascendancy has been attributed in part to the fact that they adapted themselves to infantry more readily than their neighbours. They were famous for their matchlock-men when the Rajputs depended on their horse. And this is quite in keeping with the Sikh character, which is steadier than that of their neighbours. It is difficult to get a fair estimate of the fighting qualities of different Indian races, since regimental officers always swear by their own men; but I have often heard the same tale about the Sikh from men

who have commanded mixed troops on the frontier.

"If there is a position to be taken, give me a Rajput—he has more dash. But if there is a position to defend, give me a Sikh—he has more backbone."

That is true. The Rajput is dry powder—inflammable, like the Arab and other desert products. The Sikh is of the soil. He has more backbone; he broods; he is a slow fuse.

All soldiers who have served with Sikhs know that they have unusual powers of endurance. This was recognised even in the time of Ranjit Singh, when visitors to his court and European officers employed in his service had little that was good to say of the Sikh Army. Colonel Steinbach, who served Ranjit Singh for nine years, described his troops as a dissolute rabble, the cavalry very slow in manœuvring, wretchedly mounted, deficient in courage, and only ready to charge in vastly superior numbers. Yet he admired the extraordinary hardiness and endurance of the infantry. A few years after this criticism was written the Sikhs utterly belied our estimate of them. In the battles of Aliwal and Sobraon they fought with splendid gallantry and reso-

lution, hurling themselves on our lines and refusing quarter. It can only have been training and discipline that Ranjit Singh's troops needed, for to-day they have little to learn from us in the way of riding. Their cavalry is as good as most, and they generally beat us at polo.

When I hear men talk of Sikh horsemanship, I think of a manœuvre I saw performed by the Patiala Imperial Service troops after a review by Lord Kitchener. Two squadrons of Lancers galloped up, dismounted, and threw their horses on the ground, where they lay like a field of the dead. Not a horse rebelled, and, what is more, they lay still while another two squadrons came galloping up behind and subsided in the same mysterious manner fifty yards ahead, as completely hidden behind a low rise as if they had been a regiment of infantry. Every trooper, as he dismounted, lifted his charger's near fore-foot with his left hand, and leaning over his shoulder tightened the right rein until the beast rolled over on the off. Some of the older horses lay down spontaneously at the sound of the whistle.

The manœuvre might conceivably be effective in war, but whether it is turned to account

or not, it is an exhibition of an understanding between horse and man of which any cavalry might be proud. No doubt nine troopers out of ten could make their horses lie down on the field if they had the time and patience to train them, but one is not likely to see a whole regiment of docilely recumbent chargers anywhere except in Patiala. It was inspiring to see the sudden resurrection of that field, when trooper and horse rose as one man at the whistle like ghosts at the trump of doom. As they receded the dust, golden in the light of the morning sun, rose up behind, veiling everything from sight save the compact line of green and yellow pennons stretched like a thin scythe above the palpitating dust-cloud, the crest literal and significant of the forces sweeping and thundering underneath. It was pleasant to think that these men were our tried and proven allies.

But to return to the Durbar Sahib. The Sikh soldiers, as I said, and the fanatic Akalis in their blue robes covered from the waist to the crown of their tapering turbans with knives and quoits, passed by the Tibetans and myself without a glance of reproach and entered the temple. They were Sepoys of

one of the class regiments of the Indian Army—tall, upstanding, robust men, long in the limb and square in the chest, yet possessing a subtle grace and dignity rare even in the East. The edges of their beards curled up at the chin towards the firm white turban combined with it to make a frame through which the keen eyes and regular features, especially the teeth when shown, suggested a picture of tenacity in repose, a perfect pattern of manhood. Looking at them, I tried to decipher Govind's stamp. They seemed to have some of the hard pinched look taken out of them that one sees in the Jat villagers who have not become Sikhs, or in the Jat Sikhs who have not left their land. It may be that they are less of slaves to husbandry and cramping ideas of the relations between God and man. When one compares the Khalsa with the stock from which they are sprung, one feels that nothing on earth could have stopped them if they had all been true to Govind and avoided factions and dissensions among themselves.

A few strictly orthodox Sikhs are not pleased with the management of the Durbar Sahib. They resent the presence of Brahmins who

are allowed to frequent the pavement, display idols, and recite their purans. They are distressed at the introduction of the Hindu rite of Artí, in which lights are waved in front of the Granth after evening prayer, and they say that the spirit of equality among disciples which was taught by Nanak and Govind is not fully observed. If all Sikhs are equal, the Mazbi should enter the shrine with his co-religionists by the west door facing the Granth, instead of being forced to enter by the north door which admits infidels. Also he should be allowed to bathe where he pleases instead of being restricted to the south-east corner, where the water drains out, lest he should pollute the neighbourhood of brothers of the faith. The truth is that the Sikhs have only partially rid themselves of caste. They were able to suppress the instinct so long as it endangered their existence, but when they became paramount in the Punjab and the Khalsa was sufficient for its own needs the old exclusive Brahminical spirit returned. The influence of Ranjit Singh's court increased this retrogressive tendency, and in spite of the Guru's teaching it is not always easy for a low-caste Hindu to become a Sikh to-day. Still

it is not always impossible. The acceptance or rejection of a convert is likely to depend on whether the majority in the district Singh Sabha, or Sikh Council, is conservative or progressive. The so-called conservative party wish to conserve the social prestige of the community — they are naturally exclusive; while the so-called progressives are really purists who would revert to the injunctions of Nanak and Govind. They are ready to receive all converts whom they believe to be genuine, of whatever caste. The Sikhs now number a little over two million, and in the last ten years the numbers have only risen in proportion to the general increase of population in the Punjab. The lack of converts is due as much to apathy as to obstacles placed in the way by the priests.

The lack of proselytes to Sikhism is a good illustration of the inveterate stubbornness of the caste-instinct among the Hindus. Here is a community who call themselves levellers, and profess to destroy all class distinctions. Yet this so-called democratising influence of which they boast is really an aristocratising one. That is to say, it is an influence which is ready to catch up the submerged and unconsidered

classes and enrol them in a military and spiritual brotherhood with splendid traditions, every member of which is lionised in the most literal sense of the word when he puts on the consecrated steel and adopts the title of Singh. If a community of equal repute and prestige were to spring up in the West thousands of discontented restless spirits would flock to it, but in the East one finds men born in a slough to which they feel themselves naturally affined. The sense that the old order is right is so strong that they are loth to raise themselves. They inherit an abject trade, the name of which is bandied about among men of a little higher caste as an insult, and they feel that it is the occupation to which they are naturally fitted, and even acquire a dignity in fulfilling it which the European who has risen by push can never hope to attain.

The most dignified old man I have ever seen was a Muhammadan greybeard who sat on the yoke of the bullocks that turned his Persian wheel, revolving continuously like an automaton. His eyes were fixed on the shifting horizon with a prophet's steadfast gaze that seemed to penetrate the mysteries of the unseen and dwell there inscrutably, leaving earth

and its illusions sifted, searched, and riveted out of mind. His great brow was unwrinkled with the petty cares of the world. His long grey beard swept his loin-cloth in a way that recalled the most authoritative legends of old. His Hebraic features, cut out of marble, were set in a repose that expressed the Oriental's unquestioning acceptance of a lot, predestined, fit, part of the natural order of things. The old man's yoke might have been a throne. He might have communed with Abraham. He would have inspired reverence in a Cockney of Camberwell.

Dignity is conservative. It is the expression of content. In the West it is associated with blue blood; in the East it is the mantle of the humblest. In the West the lower and middle social strata are unsettled with aspirations; in the East fatalism inspires them with repose. In the West the baron with sixteen quarterings has repose because it has not entered his head that he might be anything better. In the East the Muhammadan at the well has repose because it has not entered his head that Allah intended him to be anything different.

The general reluctance of the low-caste

Hindu to elevate himself by becoming a Sikh may perhaps be explained by the historical exception of the Mazbis. These Sikhs, the descendants of converts of the despised sweeper caste, were welcomed by the Khalsa at a time when they were engaged in a desperate struggle with the forces of Islam. But when the Sikhs dominated the Punjab the Mazbis found that the equality their religion promised them existed in theory rather than in fact. They occupied much the same position among the Jat- and Khattri-descended Sikhs as their ancestors, the sweepers, enjoyed among the Hindus. They were debarred from all privileges, and were at one time even excluded from the army. Then, finding themselves outcasts in a sense, and without occupation, the majority of them became bandits by circumstance, if not by temper.

Perhaps it was this continual state of outlawry that stiffened the Mazbi into the man he is. He first served in the British army during the Mutiny in 1857, when we were in great need of trained sappers for the siege work at Delhi. A number of Mazbis who were employed at the time in the canal works at Madhopur were offered military service,

and volunteered readily. On the march to Delhi these raw recruits fought like veterans. They were attacked by the rebels, beat them off, and saved the whole of the ammunition and treasure. During the siege Neville Chamberlain wrote of them that "their courage amounted to utter recklessness of life." They might have been engaged on a holy war. Many supernumeraries accompanied the levies, and when a soldier fell "his brother would literally step into his shoes, taking his rifle and all that he possessed, including his name, and even his wife and family."[1] Eight of them carried the powder-bags to blow up the Kashmir Gate, under Home and Salkeld. Their names are inscribed on the arch to-day and have become historical. John Lawrence wrote of the deed as one "of deliberate and sustained courage, as noble as any that have ever graced the annals of war."

These Mazbis who fought at Delhi and Lucknow were the nucleus of the 23rd and 32nd Sikh Pioneers, the sister regiments, one of whom has been engaged on nearly every

[1] The Thirty-second Sikh Pioneers' Regimental History. By Colonel H. R. Brander, C.B. Calcutta: Thacker Spink. 1906.

frontier campaign since from Waziristan in 1860 to the Bazar valley in 1908. It was the 32nd who carried the guns from Gilgit over the Shandur pass and relieved the British garrison in Chitral.

So the Mazbi has obtained honour in the Army if not elsewhere. But he is still excluded from most privileges by the Khalsa. Stolid caste-ridden prejudice one can understand,—it is the rule in the East. The mystery is how the flame of courage was lighted in the Mazbi; what unperceived embers were smouldering in these hereditary outcasts—men of crushed aspirations. If it was the pride of being caught up among "the chosen," how was it that the stimulus survived the indifference, ingratitude, and contempt with which they were treated? That is one of the mysteries of the influence of Sikhism. It may explain why the Mazbis have always been among our most loyal supporters and are likely to remain so.

Another class of Sikh who are reputed to have been desperately brave in days when all men used to carry arms are the Akalis, who frequent the Akal Banga on the pavement facing the causeway. These spare, blue-robed

fanatics, with their hawk's eyes, iron-ringed staff, and conical turban glittering with hoops of steel, catch the eye of the stranger before any other religious sect. They embody the spirit of hyperbole and beggar our conception of pride. The singular number is little affected in the East, but while most men are content with the unadorned plural, the Akali alone thinks in *lakhs*. He speaks of himself as a lakh and a quarter—*i.e.*, 125,000 men. If a companion joins him, then there are 200,000. When he starts on a journey he says "the army is afoot." If he is lame he has "a hundred different ways of walking." When he hands a brother a cup of milk he says "Take the ocean." He is a mendicant who scorns to beg. He "collects revenue."

Leaving the Akal Banga, I slipped out of th enclosure by a back passage leading into th bazaar. All round the tank there is a net work of alleys, many of them too narrow fo a beast of burden, yet leading to great houses with massive brass-studded doors. These back-waters I always think are the most fascinating quarters of great cities. I have threaded the same warrens in Baghdad and Benares, ofte with an underfeeling of shame as if I wer

some prying Pentheus in haunts too intimate and private to enter inquisitively. One finds oneself there, and one cannot help prying. Just two glances, the vague surmise, and the rapid interpretation of it, right or wrong. But it is enough. One has intruded. A servant's hand is arrested in its mysterious work. The sound of beaten metal dies away. A lemon silk petticoat glides behind a well. In these old purlieus the heart of the East is throbbing almost audibly. The men we meet in offices and durbars come out of them and masquerade among us in disguises that we have unwittingly chosen. Through our imperfect sympathy we help them to select the masks, and then forget that they are not the particular thing they seem. Only when we wander alone and lost among their secret places do we remember that we cannot hope to know much even of the most communicative of them.

There is a small passage by the Kaulsar tank where, if one were to walk with arms akimbo, one might almost brush the cobwebs on either side. Here I found a house, of which the doorway within the porch, lintels and cornice and all, was eighteen feet high. Two heavy doors

stood ajar, and through the wicket-gate of one of them peered a cow and a little girl in a purple velvet shift. The lintels of the door were of Shisham wood, which is like old walnut, intricately carved. On either side were two corbelled windows with a corbelled balcony between, and above a cornice supported by rows of stone peacocks, purple-breasted, with purple golden-starred wings spread out fanwise behind. A fakir in sackcloth carrying an iron staff with jangling rings stood on the lowest step and cried out a verse of Farid—

"Thousands leave the world every day and none return."

He cried it out again and jangled the rings on his staff, but the little girl and the cow paid no heed to his hymn of the obvious, and I passed on.

A turn and I was in a busy quarter. In the brass market I met the Granth, or the Holy Rider, as it is called when on its passage from the temple to the house of a bedridden disciple. It was borne in a palanquin, enveloped in a yellow silk cloth, and preceded by a band, with rebecks and serpent-headed trumpets. Four martial Sikhs strode beside it to an inspiring tune, fanning it with the *mor-*

chhor or peacock-feather fan and the *chauri* or sacred white cow's tail. In another street I met the Yarkandis again. They were staring at a potsherd which hung from the wall of a new house, with a fantastic grin and a malicious slit mouth like a lantern turnip, to keep off the evil eye.

I was borne along the tortuous alleys with the stream of indolently-occupied folk until I debouched again into the square where the clock-tower commands the tank. Among the sights of Amritsar that every native will point out to you impressively are two atrocities for which we are directly or indirectly responsible. One is a brand-new, red-brick, pepper-box clock-tower, which might perhaps assimilate with the architecture of Bolton or Huddersfield, but has no business on the brink of the Waters of Immortality. The other is a statue of Queen Victoria, for which some municipal chairman ought to hang. It is the caricature of a ghoulish old lady in a nursery rhyme, half witch, half zany. Her anatomy is all higgledy-piggledy, and she is tottering forward without a stick, with the proclamation in her hands, held out as if it were a bunch of speciously advertised potent herbs. She is

terrible. But for all that, or perhaps because of it, the country folk do obeisance, and rub their foreheads on the plinth.

Just about sunset I found myself outside the city on the great trunk road that leads from Calcutta to Peshawur. As the sun went down a chill sprang from the earth as sudden as the twilight. The incoming camels, with the urchins swinging on their rumps, loomed black in the distance. The leaves of the Babul-trees, creatures of sand, were etched in a pin-point criss-cross pattern against the violet screen in the west; and the great pods of the Siris were lit with the faint saffron sheen that proceeds from no point in the sky, yet suffuses everything in those few conciliatory moments after sunset, gilds dust, mud, and adobe, and permeates earth and trees with its mysterious autumnal glow. If there is a moon in the sky, so much the lovelier, for then the saffron and the violet melt into the prevalent hue more lingeringly, while trees that have been unexpansive all day exude sweet fragrance and flirt with their shadows.

Driving through the city gate I entered a stratum of warm air radiated from the sun-baked walls, and I was met with the comfort-

able reek of wood and cow-dung fires. I felt that the very smells were manlier in the north, and I was drawn again irresistibly to the temple. When I reached the causeway they had just finished the evening prayer. Once again I was in a throng of men. A soldier on the pavement sang out the cry of victory, and I thought of the words of Govind:[1]—

"He is of the Khalsa
Who speaks evil to none,
Who combats in the van,
Who gives in charity,
Who slays a Khan.
. . . . . .
Who is awake day and night,
And who never fears, although often overcome.

He is of the Khalsa
Who protects the poor,
. . . . . .
Who is wholly unfettered,
Who mounts the war-horse,
Who is ever waging battle,
Who is continually armed,
Who slays the Toorks,
Who extends the faith,
And who gives the head with what is upon it.

[1] The Tunkha Nameh of Guru Govind. The translation is from Cunningham's 'History of the Sikhs.'

The Sikhs of Govind shall bestride horses, and bear
hawks upon their hands,
The Toorks who behold them shall fly,
One shall combat a multitude,
And the Sikh who thus perishes shall be blessed for
ever."

What an open, sincere expression of faith! and it is in the bones of the best of them, if not on their lips.

MOUNT ABU.

I.

"A Saddhu who must eat out of a human skull."

BEFORE the inquiring Englishman has been in the East a year a suspicion is almost sure to be borne in upon him that India is more spiritual than Europe. It will either come through dipping in Oriental books or through conversation with some intelligent Hindu or Moslem, and for years he will be trying to square this new idea with what he knows of Eastern character through practical contact with it. Instinct, tradition, reason, will deny

it, but something will whisper that this is prejudice, the Englishman's inability to see a different point of view; and the uneasiness left by the doubt will be kept awake by occasional glimpses behind the inscrutable Oriental mask. Then, may be, a Hindu will tell him plainly and politely in his own mother tongue that the English are barbarians, who search out the means and miss the end of life; that the Oriental seeks unity, the Western differentiation; that the Oriental unites, while the Western separates, mind and matter; that the Oriental seeks to be caught up in the Universal, the Western to dominate the Particular. To which the Englishman may be prompted to reply, that God will look after the Universal and man's business is with the Particular, and that the aggregate of good in the world depends upon his attention to it.

One's first impressions of the East often last long. The maggot of national disparagement was put into my head a week after landing by a Hindu who answered my regret that the East and West could not understand each other better, and seemed to be drifting even farther apart, by saying—

"It is a pity. But it will be all right, you will see. When Europe becomes more spiritual

there will be more sympathy between the two races."

This left such an impression on me that, in the midst of the material pursuits that occupy an Anglo-Indian's time, I would often be pulled up by a sense of blindness to things of the spirit all round, and I would search for the expression of the spiritual life in a helpless hole-and-corner sort of way, just as an entomologist peers behind palings and lifts up stones to find a grub or chrysalis.

A few days afterwards a friend was showing me over a bazaar in Madras. I did not know the difference between a Mussulman and a Hindu, and I envied the way he could distinguish nearly every figure in the dazzling kaleidoscopic crowd by some caste-mark or obscure difference in dress or feature. He explained the privileges and disabilities which differentiated each sect. He showed me a Brahmin who might not eat mushrooms and a Brahmin who might, but whose wife mightn't; and he pointed out a Saddhu who must lie on an antelope's skin, another who might not lay his staff on the ground, and a third who must eat and drink out of a human skull.

I was chiefly interested in the religious vagabonds and ascetics, and my head was already

full of strange things when I saw three intense-looking men in white, bareheaded, with close-cropped hair, and wearing a white screen over their mouths tied by a piece of string to the back of their ears like an eye-shade. These men, whoever they might be, were very earnest about something.

"What are these?" I asked my friend.

"Jains," he said.

"Kim's Jains?"

"The same."

"And what is the mouth-guard for?"

"They have a holy horror of swallowing insects."

I looked up the Jains, and out of much conflicting authority discovered that the sect originated between 500 and 600 B.C. It is not an offshoot of Buddhism, as is popularly believed, but contemporary with it, both creeds being the outcome of the Sankhya school of philosophy, which denied the existence of the eternal, supreme deity. The aim of both is to renounce the world and to escape the misery of life by extinguishing desire. Both seek Nirvana, which means to the Buddhist absorption in the universal essence; to the Jain merely release from re-birth. Both sects

were regarded as heretical by the Hindus, but while Buddhism was persecuted out of existence by the Brahmins, Jainism survived after many trials, being less opposed to the orthodox faith.

In the north of India Jains and Hindus seem to live together amicably, and the Jains, through long contact with the Brahmins, have come to recognise the Hindu deities, and in some cases to admit them into their temples, though they worship none in particular. In the south dogma is not so plastic, and men have a saying about rivals, that they love each other like a Brahmin and a Jain. The Jains' denial of the authority of the Vedas is in itself a sufficient cause of war.

After reading nearly all that had been written about the Jains, I put my impressions to the test by finding out what I could of them from people who had met them in the flesh. A Hindu told me that they were atheists, and that they did not wash. A Baptist missionary summarised their faith—it was a quotation, I think—by saying that they denied God, worshipped man, and nourished vermin. Then I learnt from a Jain barrister that in old days the whole of India was

Jain, and that Hinduism, with its extravagant fables, its degraded rites, and its infamous sacrifices, was the conception of apostates from the true faith, which was very much what Abbé Dubois was told by the Mysore Jains a hundred years ago.

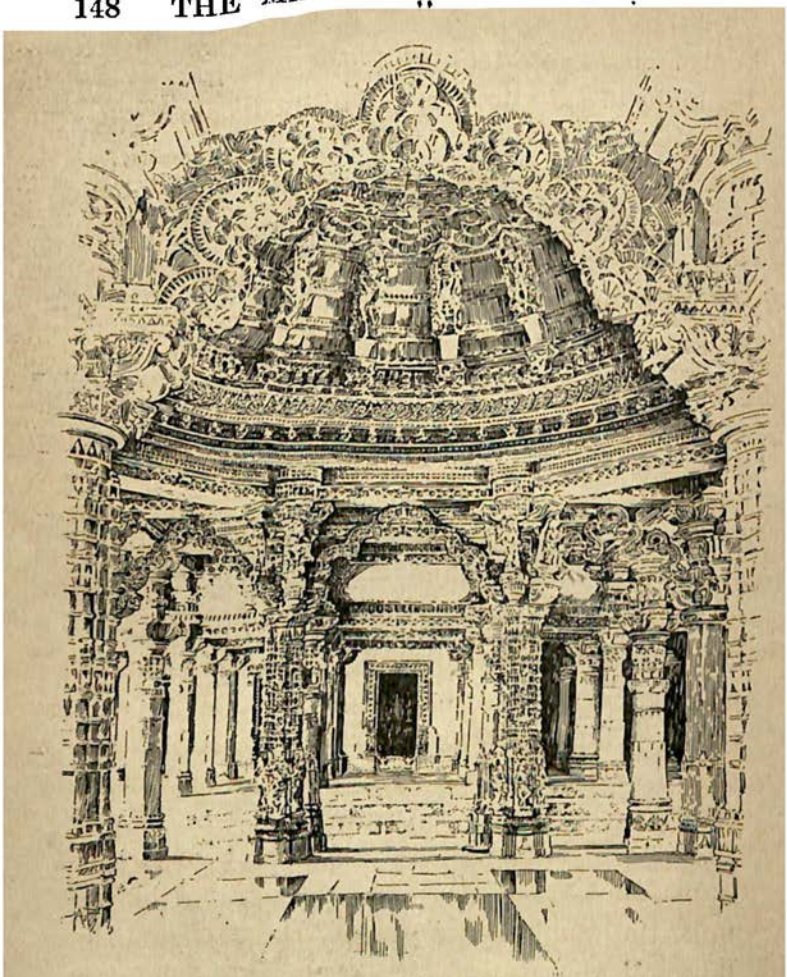
But, apart from these inconsistencies, I found it easier to get at a fair estimate of their secular virtues, from which it seemed that the Jains were likely to be the folk who would bring me into touch with the substance of the spirituality whose shadow I had been chasing. So I made up my mind to go to Mount Abu when the first chance offered and see "if there was anything in it." I thought, perhaps, in the haunts of the quietists at Dilwarra and Achilgar I might become initiate.

II.

Mount Abu is swaddled in old legend; it is the Arbuda of the Paranas; it has a hymn to itself. The marvels that sprang in the old time from faith and the sword gave it a halo of sanctity even among the resorts of heroes and demigods. The Vedic and Puranic gods

played there in the youth of the world, overthrew the demons, and at the intercession of the Rishi Vashita caused the Rajputs to spring from the Agni Kund on the hillside beneath the Cow's Mouth. Then in later days, only a few years before William the Norman conquered our island, the Jains flourished there and built the shrines which have associated the hill with their name.

The temples of Dilwarra and Achilgar are miracles of elaboration; but beautiful as is the whole effect of the *mandapam*, the colonnades, the pyramidal sikras, and the horizontal arches supporting the domes, there is an uncompromising severity in the details of the shrine, which are ugly enough if one looks into them minutely. Once enter a Jain temple and you will never dissociate the sect from the images of the Tirthankaras, the twenty-four founders of their order who attained beatitude through contemplation of the Infinite. In the central shrine, approached by the *mandapam* in the middle of the courtyard, the saint sits cross-legged and surveys the world he has renounced. His glassy eyes stare from his cold niche with a complacency that chills the blood. He is the personified



Jain Temple, Mount Abu.

negation of humanity. You would escape if you could by indulging the instinct of con-

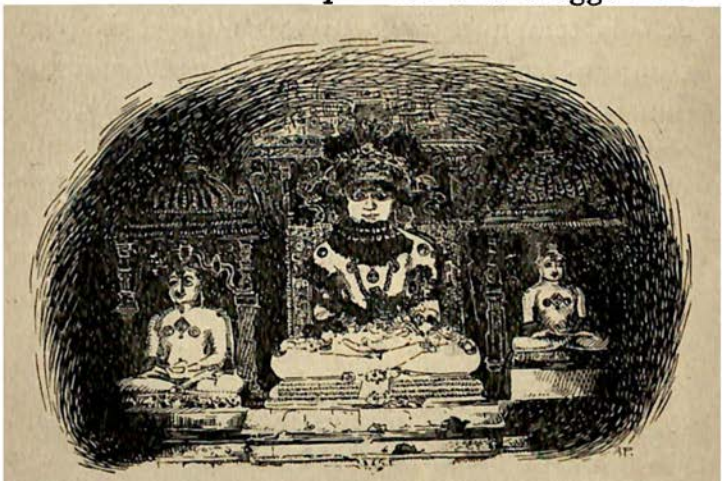
tempt, but you feel that the evasion would be insincere. You know it; the image knows it. He seems to say, "I am Nothingness; I am Disillusionment; I am Truth." To which the intruder, if he has been nourished in a religion of love, will breathe a prayer that he may keep his illusions for all time. "If you are the answer of the great riddle, may I never see beyond the veil."

But the central image, with its inhuman eyes and smile, is only one in an infinitude of embodied complacencies. For the Jains have a genius for repetition. The cloisters, which are built on the plan of the old Buddhist *viharas*, with twelve or fifteen cells to each arcade for the monks' quarters, are peopled instead with the same image, each in his own cell, staring stonily into the courtyard. One figure does duty for all. One Tirthankara is the image of another. Nirvana has no moods. There are no grades in beatitude. They are indistinguishable, save for the symbol of the bull, the shell, the antelope, the serpent, the lion, on the pedestal of each. But there is diversity all round. There is not an inch of their cells, of the cloisters, pillars, architraves, lintels, jambs of the doors, domes, ceilings,

which is not carved in high relief with the images of gods and beasts, or both, finely chiselled in the white marble of which the shrine is built. The whole effect is to tease one out of thought. Looking at it, I could understand the mood of the iconoclast. The destroyer of images appeared to me a man of sensibility, a man who thinks and feels too much rather than too little, who is not deceived by prattle about art. I could imagine a spiritual man with a little warm blood in his veins running amok in the place with a chisel and a hammer. I felt that Dilwarra owed its preservation to its remoteness. Aurungzebe would have levelled the temple to the ground.

Here, then, was the spirituality that I sought, and it sent a cold shudder through me. It was beautiful in a way, as the work of Aubrey Beardsley is beautiful, but with grotesque elaboration rather than simplicity. There was imagination in it, the successful expression of the spirit that underlay and directed the work, the patient devotion of men who are content to spend a lifetime in the ornamentation of a niche or in carving the interior of a single cell, and above all, the devotion of the founder,

Vimala Sah, tender nourisher of the microbe and the worm, who in the year 1032 spent many millions of rupees, earned in merchandise, in the glorification of the first Tirthankara and himself, and for whom gangs of slaves sweated in distant quarries and dragged the



Nemnath.

marble up the hillside. There is a shrine to him opposite the temple gate, in which he appears almost as large as the Tirthankara himself, riding on a dropsical horse and attended by ten elephants.

Another temple at Dilwarra, built in 1197, is dedicated to Nemnath, the twenty-second

Tirthankara, who, on the morning he was to wed a king's daughter, left the world for a hermit's cave, and, what is more, persuaded the princess that this was the only thing to do. The guide-book says that "they lived a platonic life on the mountain for many years." In this temple my gloom was mitigated by a group of soldiers who were going round at the same time with a Babu and the guide-book I had borrowed in the hotel. They were a little sceptical about the celibacy of the twenty-second Tirthankara, and none of them had the ghost of an idea what "platonic" meant. But they were too sensible to take the place very seriously or to allow the Tirthankaras to get on their nerves. One of the corporals halted by every cell, and peering into it said, "Sime old fice," or "This 'ere's Nemnath again. 'E wouldn't 'urt a floiy, 'e wouldn't."

And when the Babu explained that Devi was a Hindu goddess, and her presence in the shrine was inconsistent with orthodox Jain tenets, he said very much to the point—

"You cawn't get these blokes to drop anything. It's the sime as they'll go on kerrying baskets of muck on their 'eads when you've tort 'em to put it into a barrer."

This was just what I wanted to say myself, but I couldn't put it so well.

The old Hindu superstitions are deep-rooted. Sakya Muni, Mahavira, Nanak, all cut a clear path out of the tangle, but the rank undergrowth grew up again to impede and choke the way.

An attendant told me that on certain days of the year a goat is slain for the shrine of Devi in the temple of Nemnath, and the bleeding carcass is brought into the courtyard, where men have devoted themselves for centuries to the preservation of life. Perhaps it is true that the sacrilege was committed at one time in the Dilwarra temple, though it is hard to believe it in spite of the anomalies of faith that one meets with every day.

Tod tells us that the Jain king, Komarpal, kept his army in camp all the rains because it was impossible to march without killing animalculæ. Oil-mills and potters' wheels were suspended from the middle of June till October, and no lamps were lit in the monsoon lest moths should perish in the flames. In Gujerat you may see Jains feeding the ants by the roadside. At Ahmedabad

and elsewhere houses are kept for insects, into which penitents enter, devoting their persons to the feast. Charity can go no farther.

The strictness of the Jain observances varies a great deal, according to the sect. The temples dedicated to Nemnath and Adinath at Dilwarra belong to the Swetambaras, or white-clad ones. There is another temple belonging to the Digambaras, the "sky-clad" or naked, who deny their women salvation and wear no clothes at their meals. Not many years ago they wandered over the country naked, but now the police have intervened, and one seldom meets them without a loin-cloth. Neither of these orders is as strict as the Dhondiyas, a far less numerous sect, who reverence no idols, restrict their diet to two kinds of vegetables, and carry their ideal of the sanctity of life to the point of fanaticism. These were the men I saw in the bazaar in Madras. Afterwards I visited the rest-house of their wandering priests in an old city in the Punjab.

III.

I went to the rest-house expecting to find a particular thing, and I found, not the unexpected, as so often happens, but the symbol I looked for charactered on every brow for any one to read, that seemed to say, "I have done no hurt to any living thing. I have tended and preserved all creatures alive." A narrow flight of smooth concrete steps led to a chamber above one of the city gates. I left my shoes outside the door and entered with an uncomfortable sense of prying. Perhaps mine was the first white man's shadow that had fallen across the floor. But the Jains were not disturbed. It was but the shadow of a shade, for my concrete self was no more than a materialised illusion projected for a moment across their vision of the real. They were nearly all old men—some with shaven heads, some with stiff, upright, grey hair, innocent of oil and water, for their faith forbids casual ablution. Yet they did not appear filthy, in the ordinary sense. Their skin was dry and smooth like polished furniture. It looked as if it might

be kept clean with a brush. Their smell was their own. It did not invite closer contact, but it did not disgust. Uncleanliness with them is a part of godliness. They would rather die than crush a wriggling microbe in the water. Precautions to the same end were visible all round the room. Every one of them had the pent-house insect-guard over his mouth, and carried beside him a soft mop with a loop for the handle to brush the insects from his path. In the corner of the room were large vessels of milk covered over with gauze.

There was a low murmur of voices in the room like the drone of summer gnats. Some of the priests reclined on mats; some stood beside the pillars gazing into vacancy, or moved across the polished floor like the pigeons that flew out when I entered. The spirit of gentleness was palpable there; yet I wondered if it was due to genuine tender-heartedness or mere empty formalism, superstitious habit, and the fear of injuring oneself vicariously. We are slow to accept strange ideals and to admit that there can be much in views that jar with our own. Perhaps that is why a suspicion was born in on

me that the Jain is humane by formula, and that his tenderness is unintelligent, conventional, and springs from no living motive in the heart. Yet, even if this is so, it does not condemn the principles of the faith any more than the conduct of modern Christians reflects upon their Founder.

Outside the city I was shown the municipal rat-house and its Jain caretaker. Plague had been severe in the place that year, and thousands of men and rats had died. The elders were persuaded by Government that the rats were at the bottom of it all; so they prescribed a campaign against them. But the Jains and some of the more orthodox Hindus swore that, so far from allowing rats to be killed in their houses, they would rather perish than injure a flea on the back of one of them. So a compromise was arrived at. The Jains allowed cages to be set in their houses, on condition that the captives should be housed and fed in a depot outside the city.

On two twin hummocks separated by a trench I found the rat-house, and the guardian's whitewashed hut. The cage was a menagerie car with iron wheels, laid on a solid brick founda-

tion, and covered over with a stalwart *pandal*, —so pious and humane were these good folk who provided lodging for God's creatures and shelter from the rain. Large as the cage was, there was not room on the floor for more than half the pensioners. The others stood in tiers on one anothers' backs—a scabby, quivering, weak-eyed throng, consciously waiting their doom. A few hundred yards off, by a ruined shrine, under a peepul tree, we found the guardian asleep. We discovered from him that a dozen or more rats were imported every day, and as many died; also when the place was swept out many escaped; so that the old Brahmin in the shrine had to fortify himself against invasion by more traps. The recaptured ones were scrupulously returned to the cage.

Being familiar with the cruel kindness of the East the new treatment of rats did not surprise me. The Asiatic ideal of charity to animals is to avoid being individually responsible for the death of any creature. Folk who subscribe to asylums for decrepit cattle contemplate suffering without distress. The horse with a broken leg is left to die by the roadside, or dragged for miles behind a cart for the sake of his

skin; the pig that is to be removed is carried head downwards, squealing hideously, with his legs tied to a stick, between the shoulders of two men; to preserve birds for distant markets fowlers snap the wing-bones and throw them into loose heaps in cane baskets. And in the midst of all this callousness, and apparently indifferent to it, the Jains go about with their cumbrous apparatus of salvation; though, if the goal is Nirvana, or release from re-birth, one would think that a kinder way to treat living creatures would be to tumble them through as many of the existences that intervene as possible, or at least to make smooth their path.[1]

When I reached the Jain rest-house it was an hour before sunset, and the priests were coming in for their evening meal. The Jain layman who had introduced me to the *mahant* as an inquirer anxious to learn about all truths, reminded me that after the sun had set no food nor drink might pass their lips. So I

[1] An enlightened community of the Swetamber Jains have recently formed an organisation resembling our Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The movement should be quoted on the credit side by apologists for our hybrid system of education.

took myself off with the understanding that I should come again and learn all about their particular revelation, whatever it might be. But I did not see these holy men again, though I came to learn about their system through abstracts of their sacred books.

Their Gurus say that Jainism is eternal,—that it had no founder, but existed from the beginning of time. Time consists of circles, and there are twenty-four Tirthankaras for each half circle. Mahavira, who attained Nirvana in 526 B.C., was the successor of earlier Tirthankaras who preached Jainism through countless cycles of ages. The Jain sacred books are filled with a fantiful system of metaphysics, and a cosmogony that makes the head reel. As in the Buddhist and Brahminical books, time is measured on a dizzying scale. They define the exact span of the different compartments of heaven and hell, the Jambu-wipa, or the earth we live on, with the seas encircling it, and the dividing mountains and lakes of four hundred thousand leagues; the Kalpas or æons of time varying from forty million millions of years to a few thousand; the sixteen mansions of Swarga, where blessed souls enjoy bliss; and Naroka,

where those damned beyond any reincarnation endure torments according to their sins, and derive what comfort they may from the knowledge that their sentence can only endure thirty-three thousand years. The thing that struck me as most strange was, that a sect whose creed is nothing but a tangle of confused metaphysics with a few moral axioms thrown in, offering no immediate menace of hell or hope of paradise, should adhere to such a severely practical application of their tenets to life, involving more self-denial than any other formula or stimulus of faith.

IV.

To return to Abu. I visited the mountain in August, a season when in the intervals of rain the hill-top is shrouded in mist. Abu lies about seventy miles as the crow flies from the Gulf of Cutch. It stands in the path of the monsoon, and catches the clouds straight from the sea. In July seventy-five inches had fallen. During the first ten days of August the sun did not shine three hours. The landscape was wrapped in the hooded melancholy of the rains.

You could not distinguish a tree from a hill; a shadowy hummock beside the path loomed out of the mist like a giant peak; a pool on a plateau a hundred feet beneath seemed to be floating up from the plains. The scarp was scarred with cup-holes, generally in pairs, in the shape of grinning eye-sockets with streaks of lichen depending like wrinkles and tears; and every now and then, when the grey mist parted, you found yourself looking into the eyes of some ancient aboriginal hag or "promontory goat," huddled out of the rain in one of these crevices, like a saint in a niche. The temple of Siva at Ooria stood in three feet of water, and the lush corn grew half-way up to the architrave. The marble lingam-yoni, rank with mould and slime, looked more obscene than ever. The court of Santinath's temple at Achilgar was so slippery that the caretaker who showed me round had to circumvent the shrine by climbing over the carved elephants' heads that projected from the plinth. An impassable torrent roared between me and the anchorites of Guru Sikhar. The seven hundred pious steps to Gaemukh were a running water-course. I ploughed my way through the bog and rain, and sometimes

snatched a hasty meal in a cave beside a sad-eyed Bhil, feeling all the while that I was seeing the temples in their right setting. Mist and gloom are congenial to them. The images of their Tirthankaras preach disillusionment. The sermons in their stones are in the same key,—a monotonous exhortation to escape, to be deceived no more by the phenomena of matter, to sit down in a niche in the rock and resign all inclination, to have no wish to be warm or dry, or housed or fed or loved, but to yield at once to the inevitable, and without effort or pain, to be—

> "Roll'd round in Earth's diurnal course
> With rocks and stones and trees."

I saw Achilgar in the same gloom as Dilwarra; but on a second visit the clouds lifted momentarily. Dilwarra is a frequented place; it lies in a hollow of the hill near Mount Abu station. Achilgar is remote and lonely, a village of temples standing one above another in tiers on a cliff. Dilwarra attracts you with its cold complacent beauty outside, and repels you with its elaborate, perfected hideousness within. Achilgar, perched in the clouds, is wrapt in brooding mystery. It is a ghoulish

place. The moss-grown rocks are pregnant with history and legend, spiritual and secular. The rocks leer at you with wry faces, conscious of all that has gone on. Decrepit banyan trees lean on them for support. Hanuman, Bhairon, and Ganesh conspire for evil in the crevices of their roots. And at every corner you tumble upon something which tells you as "plain as whisper in the ear" that all you have heard about the place is true.

The path leads through barley-fields with straggling hedges of wild roses, and in many parts it forms a tributary to the clear bubbling stream that bisects the upland. It rises over several undulations towards the ridge that flanks the plateau on the south-east, till one comes to a spot where the image-houses by the sacred tank, the white marble shrines, the anchorite caves cut out of the sheer cliff, peep out of the mist all round, tumbled amidst the crags and trees in a way that tempts you to sit down on a wet stone and take it all in quietly. It is the mood in which one holds a long-coveted book and slowly cuts the pages. In this way the spell of Achilgar grows on you with a luxurious

deliberateness through a succession of surmises in which distances are confused by the wreaths of mist curling over it, revealing bit by bit with wild suggestions of the whole which the intermittent bursts of sunshine only exaggerate.

One must remember that in the old days the Pramars ruled at Achilgar. They would be kings there now, folk say, but for the impiety of one who doubted a miracle of Siva. Everybody knew but this sceptic that the god had put out his toe from his shrine of Vishéswar in Benares to steady the mountain of Abu, and by way of proof his yellow toe-tail is there to-day for any one to see who has the courage to peep into a crevice in the floor of Achileswar, the temple opposite the wet stone where we are sitting. The people of the hill know that the fissure leads down to hell; but the unbeliever in his pride must needs put revealed truth to the test. So he built an aqueduct from a fountain to the fissure, expecting to see it overflow, for which he was cursed by the god, and his race perished with him. At Gaemukh, on the other side of the hill, you may see his statue in brass—a bold man standing erect

with hands lifted in the unaccustomed pose of supplication.

Another witness of Siva's potent wrath stands in the courtyard. Nandin, his sacred kneeling cow, was bruised and cuffed by the infidel Muhammed Begra of Ahmedabad, but the god visited him with a multitudinous swarm of bees, which drove his army in panic to the plains. They cast away their loot and all their trappings. The great trident which stands to this day on the pedestal beside the cow was made out of the arms picked up in the rout.

A third legend centres round a Pramar of nobler mould—the avenger of the gods when their sacred lake of *ghee* was defiled and ravined every night by three demons who wallowed there in the guise of buffaloes. The Pramar slew all three with one shaft. He stands on the margin of the lake beside the profane beasts, slayer and slain carved out of a dull blue slate. The bow is in his hand, and the wounds gape still to witness how the arrow sped.

There are many other shrines in the courtyard of the temple of Achileswar, and in the image-houses round the sacred tank where

the black cobra dwells you may see all the avatars of Vishnu under one canopy. Hard by is the house of the Jain Mahant, its antique walls overgrown with fern and moss. Now the racing cloud-drift has receded and a shaft of light from the invisible sun has laid bare the face of the cliff; and where the temples rise in tiers and terraces to the summit, one sees a hermit's cave cut out of the rock, the eye of the frowning precipice. But in a moment the grey vapours have recaptured the place and engulfed everything.

The ascent is full of mystery. A turn in the rock and one comes upon Hanuman's gate, black with age and rain, sullen, secretive, with empty cells on either side where the guard hailed the kings who rode through. It is built of solid granite, even now so compact that one cannot tell where the rock ends and the masonry begins. Drooping, melancholy banners hang from the architrave, and the gross red god attitudinises on the wall. Water bubbles through the old gateway with music older than the Vedas. Framed by the arch in front is another lake on which dabchicks are playing round a willow island. Then looking back towards the *kund* one sees

an unexpected shrine on a knoll, the Jain temple of Santinath, that has been looming there all the while unseen, embraced and sheltered by great banyan trees, through which its marble walls gleam white and spectral.

Beyond the lake one passes through a second gateway. All this time I had seen no one, and heard nothing save the cry of hidden peacocks. No dogs barked, and I began to think that it was for some festival that this little town,

> "Mountain-built, with peaceful citadel,
> Was emptied of its folk this pious morn."

But the clatter of my nailed boots on the cobbles brought a few faces to the door, and a Vishnuite of low caste attached himself to me and showed me over the Jain temples.

V.

There is nothing in the architecture or sculpture of Achilgar to compare with Dilwarra. The Tirthankaras are repeated on a smaller scale; the carving is not so finished and elaborate; the horizontal arches, domes,

porticoes, cells, are relatively mean; there is a good deal of stucco and rude scamped workmanship. But the place has a charm of its own in its mystery, its remoteness, and its unexpectedness. It is more like a lamasery than any other collection of shrines I have seen in India. It climbs up the hill in the same way and looks over the edge into the same abysmal mist, and the deified saints stare through their iron grills in the face of the four winds of heaven. The pagoda-like shrines are four-faced, and topped by the jingling Buddhist THEE; lanterns hang from the ceiling; the walls are painted in the Chinese fashion, with hills like haycocks out of perspective; and the Swastika mark is in the centre of every marble square on the floor.

Over the entrance of the topmost shrine but one there is a wall-painting by a decadent of Ahmedabad. The scene is a broad street, with a lamp-post in the middle. The houses, unredeemed Europe of the Haussmann period—without grace, ornament, variety, or inner symbolism. The purblind inmate of one of them, a consequential Englishman, is strolling down the road, his hat tilted forward, a cigar

in his mouth, and a gun under his arm. A naked Bhil with a bow and arrow precedes, and two truculent-looking policemen follow with swords. The only other figures in the frieze are a pot-bellied Hindu ascetic, gorged and sensual-looking, and a Muhammadan flogging two bullocks in a cart.

Here, then, was the other side of the shield, the verdict of the recluse upon progress: Europe through Jain spectacles. The maggot in my head, which had been lulled to sleep by the narcotic of pride, stirred again uneasily, and I saw my race as it appeared to the artist—proud, cruel, insolent, overbearing; no more sensitive to blood-guiltiness than the aboriginal Bhil; mercenary, Philistine, busy and fussy about little things of the world, with no sense of the brevity of life and the enveloping shadow of the Infinite; doing everything for self-aggrandisement, yet believing themselves all the while to be the sole inheritors of the three cardinal virtues, which they dub Christian, and in obedience to which they drill the weak to their needs and exploit them to their material advantage in the name of righteousness.

The Jain artist had defeated me. I blushed

for the West. I was almost persuaded to be a Little Englander. His nightmare of civilisation was so real that I felt I ought to abandon the estate my fathers had won honestly, and leave the tenants to fight it out among themselves for the reversion, believing them worthier than myself. The graphic irony he had put into the picture tilted the balance over with a shock. Asia sank; Europe dangled ignominiously in the air. A moment ago I had been blaspheming his Tirthankaras. Now I felt like the tourist who, having gone out to see the great Roshanas, Buddhas of the Law and the Dragon, awful emblems of change figuring the ceaseless conflict of material forces with the Infinite, returns home unconscious of their abstract significance, and repeats—

> "The heathen in his blindness
> Bows down to wood and stone."

"Where are the Jains?" I asked my Vishnuite guide.

"In Abu," he said.

"What are they doing there? Is to-day a festival?"

"They are in their shops. There is no one here; the mahant is in the plains."

It was true. There was nobody there save the caretaker with his massy keys and two or three of his kind asleep by the ashes of a fire. Two women sat by the gate and took it in turns to search each other's hair; but they were evidently not of the faith which entails hospitality and nourishment to all vermin. The Jains were in their shops. "So they are not so spiritual after all," I thought. But I made humble excuse for them. They are merchants and money-lenders because they can be nothing else without destroying life. Agriculture is abhorrent to them since so many grubs and caterpillars are crushed beneath the ploughshare. They are rich because they are thrifty and have no inclination to luxury. They are honest, as the standard goes, and on this account are a great deal in request in treasuries. But they are usurers. The villagers tell me they will extract the last *pie* from a dying man. I felt the scales were swinging back. Yet among their own folk their charity is large, and many give all their possessions to the Church. That is why their temples are the richest and most elaborate in India. All of which seems to imply that they carry out their principles in practice more

strictly than other communities, which is indeed the case. Yet, after all, it was but a cold and perfunctory kind of spirituality that I had found, and so formal and detached from human sympathy that I began to hug my own materialism, and even to suspect that the Jain artist had tampered with the scales.

"Take me to the cave of Gopi Bishen," I said, and I was led there on my hands and knees by a goats' track. The cave was painted all over with figures of gods and heroes and holy saints who had dwelt there in the past, but there was no one within. A hole slanted into the darkness from a cell in the corner leading to the bowels of the earth. Perhaps the hermit was inside. Perhaps he had made himself invisible, as repute said he could. There was a human smell about the place; the ashes on the floor were warm; I felt as if I were standing among ghosts.

We scrambled down the cliff. At the bottom we found the door of Achileswar open. A solitary voice was repeating some litany in the dark. There was some one by the altar crooning over the fissure that held the god's toe. The chant was sad and plaintive beyond words. A flicker of light sprang from the darkness

within the shrine and I saw fingers moving in the air before the mysterious dimly illumined god. They were scattering flowers on his lap. The flicker expired and a figure floated into the gloom of the outer shrine, where its sandals lay on the floor before the sanctuary. It approached muttering some *mantra* and gazed at me fixedly without speech.

"It is the hermit," my guide said; "he does not see you." And I looked into the eyes of an old man without illusions. I was face to face with the spiritual.

VI.

The stream at Ooria had fallen, so the next day I waded across and climbed Guru Sikhar, the highest peak of Abu (5600 feet). It was a stiff ascent up the slippery steamy rocks to the anchorites' caves on the summit, the kind of rough track by which penitents should leave the world. In the caverns of this remote cloud-swept peak I looked for ghostly things, but found more of earth than of heaven. And I was glad. The hermits were not so spiritual as I had expected. I liked them the better for

it. The anchorite in the cave under the shrine of Dadu Brigha had been a handy fellow in his youth. He had built doors and windows to his own cave, his chela's cave, the cow's cave, the kitchen, and the store-house; cut a clean flight of steps out of the rock to the shrine above, and planted trees and roses in the fissures. I found him sitting in his cell attended by his chela, honoured and at peace, with a look of quiet content and pride in his workmanship.

To my "Salaam, Guru-ji!" he answered "Salaam, maharaj!" in a way that dissipated all sense of intrusion. I called his dwelling a palace among caves, and asked him how long he had lived there, for I had heard that the Saddhus of Guru Sikhar boast of the years they have dwelt in their cells, and the villagers of Ooria give evidence and take sides.

"Sixty years!" I said. "It is hardly possible. You appear still quite a young blade."

At which he smiled gently and his irreverent young chela guffawed.

"Is that a well?" I asked, pointing to a hole in the rock with a gleam of black water in it.

"No; it is my cave," the chela said.

"It is a bit wet just now," said the Guru, "so he shares mine."

They were cheery enough in their damp cell, and laughed and joked and smoked and drank tea, and the chela beat the drum to please me, and thrust a cane chair out of the cave for me to sit on, and told me with pride how his Guru had built and contrived everything in the place. Their granary was full, and the sleek cow reeked of comfort and homeliness.

The chela led me up the steps to the old bell and the shrine of Dadu Brigha on the summit.

"When the mist clears you can see all the world," he said. Peering down I saw a lusty young Saddhu ascending from another cave in the hill. I thought he was going to pay the Guru an afternoon call. Instead he clattered up the steps, brushed past me into the shrine without a glance to right or left, and plumped down on his hands and knees before the tiny image, dinting his brow with his long talons and dragging his unkempt matted hair in the dust. Then he muttered some brief reverence to the altar, daubed his forehead with its ashes, and bundled out again. But before descending he banged the bell thrice to draw the saint's attention, and while the

response was echoing clearly from across the valley, he was gone. I never saw anything so perfunctory in my life.

Guru Sikhar was the end of my pilgrimage among the Jains and the Hindu ascetics of Mount Abu. I found there very much what I had observed elsewhere. As to the spirituality I was looking for I have no more than a suspicion how much I discerned or missed. I only know that the Guru and his chela were the most human Saddhus I had met among the hundreds of thousands of children of indolence who spread like locusts over India, living upon the substance of the poor. In a land where apathy and superstition are bred in the bone it is strange that there are not more of them; for to renounce the world is to be independent, honoured, fed, exempt from work and responsibility, secure from oppression, answerable to no man. Their spirituality seems to me the dead fruit of instincts whose vigour long since departed. Ritual and a perfunctory formalism have survived the living impulse of the heart. The wick flickers all night in the much be-niched shrine, but the guardian smokes bhang and dreams away his days in ease. He receives but he does not

give. The Jain, on the contrary, gives. He suffers materially for his particular idea of the unseen world. He is spiritual, therefore, according to the strict definition. Yet if I were to meet my Hindu friend again who put the maggot in my head, I do not know in the least how I should answer him. I think perhaps I might feel less uneasy than I did. I might put the case to him somehow like this:—

"Your contempt for our activities is all of a piece with the Asiatic dream of the Infinite, the Impersonal, the Universal, the Absolute. You say that there can be no spirituality without religion, that our churches are empty, and that we do not seem to think of anything but enjoyment. You call us mercenary and material because we have a higher standard of comfort, and because you see us busying ourselves with material things and ransacking the earth for our convenience. And there is a great deal of truth in your indictment. Your own spiritual aim, if you would have us judge you by your published ideals and not as we find you, is, or has been, to escape the meshes of material phenomena. If this is so you are, or have been, by so much the more spiritual than we. We are more in-

genuous and a great deal happier than the Indians, and we think we fit in better with the great Artificer's scheme. We are childishly pleased with the house He has built us, and if we see any way in which we think we can make it more habitable we tinker at it. You pessimists and philosophers are a very different kind of tenant. You smell offence in your mansion from the first; you close up the avenues of your senses to it, searching for some narcotic to dull the impression. For the reason we need not look further than the house. Change houses change selves. There is a bit of your own fatalism.

"Your struggle to escape seems to us the neglect of a trust. What you call 'concentration' we call 'abstraction.' Also we have a suspicion that you appear more spiritual than we because you have fewer illusions, because you don't care so much, and that your ritual more than your religion has become part of your lives.

"If we admit that the aims of East and West are alike selfish and inconsistent with ideals, then in weighing the atoms of our spirituality it will be our parerga that will count — the things we do by the way while

we are pursuing indifferent ends, the Swetamber humanitarian movement for instance, and the impulses which underlie such common idle phrases as 'to face the music,' or 'to help a lame dog.'

"No doubt you have been more spiritual in the past. You may be so now, but in judging you must allow for the tendency to separate religion and morals, ethics and conduct. One crosses a certain latitude and one loses a guiding star. Nevertheless one steers a course. My own comfort is that in the West sometimes when a man finds himself without a chart of faith—whether through too much or too little imagination—there is an influence which pilots him as straight as the north star by an intuitive code which finds expression every day in some such phrase as, 'It is not playing the game.'"

If I delivered myself thus how my friend would stare! His inward comment would be, "A most unspiritual man!" and my defence, that the faculty we have of seeing beauty in the curve of evolution in which we are caught up to-day and hurried along, must imply some sort of limit to the materialism we are charged with.

IN RONI BIR.

THE *bir* lies within a mile of the old city. It is enclosed with a hedge, or stack rather, five feet high and broad, of cut thorn-bushes tunnelled here and there by the wild boar. The black-buck leap it anywhere in the five-mile perimeter. The cool chequered glades outside are haunted by them; for no one would dare to destroy anything within seven miles of the preserve.

It is a silent place. In the evening the faint distant sounds of the city enhance its peace. The bell tolls in Kali's temple. The conch-shell of the Gurudwara summons the Jat to prayer. The Muezzin on the tower calls the Azan. But no idle strollers leave the city to invade the forest; no one visits these glades save the goat-herds and the little boys who drive their asses home laden with the cow's homely offering to Agni.

Inside the city walls there are wise men learned in Eastern and Western lore from the Vedas to modern works on social and religious evolution. They could quote Wordsworth and Shelley on the influence of nature; they could capitulate the elements of beauty in an English landscape in spring. But it is a strange tongue to them; they do not know one bird or insect from another. In their own language they have no separate words for "chrysalis" and "egg." I asked a friend once if he had ever been in the *bir*. "Sir," he said, "what business should take me there?"

The Hindu does not love nature. He feels no kinship with earth as Englishmen do. He does not wander in the jungle to meet the wild creatures. In the golden age when the Vanaprashtas retired into the forest it was with the desire to escape from nature by being absorbed in it. If the grey squirrel or the tortoise played at the Rishi's feet, he saw them swimmingly as visions crossing a mirror, the mere reflex of unreality. He dwelt in the jungle to meditate upon the sacred syllable "OM." Grasping at the universe he missed earth. To our own hermits, spiritual or temperamental, every "hooded

eyeball" shrouds a will, a being strangely individualised, who shares the earth with us and a large part of our love.

The truth is, the Indian finds nature a hard mother. You might argue that the sparseness of her gifts should commend them. But it is not so. The blistering heat that cows a race into patience dries up the springs of occasional gratitude. The soil is adamant with drought, or fissured with the savage violence of the monsoon. In the Himalayas conditions are happier, and men wear flowers in their hair and in their caps and go about their work singing. In Japan a peasant mother will take her child fifteen miles to see a plum-tree in bloom. If the Hindus had loved earth as dearly, they would have driven the Pathans and the Moguls back over the mountains or into the sea and kept Europe in her place. But they have not cared for these things at any time.

The *bir* repeats the burden of their pessimism. The spring is sad because sad things are beginning again. The coppersmith taps his metal rail all day; the peacock meorrs like a huge imprisoned cat; the crow pheasant bubbles liquidly in dry places; the dove moans

with Vedic melancholy; the Koel screams like a sick man's nerves atwitch, vocalised in a delirious sleep. And not a song-bird anywhere. What echo of gladness can these voices awake in the children of the soil?

Melancholy is the genius of the place. But I have profaned her sovran shrine often enough with other aliens of my race. We expel the goddess unceremoniously when we gallop through the forest. Then there is a wild stir. The ground is open enough in places and one enjoys a bloodless chase with no malice in it. It is good to be out on an early cold-weather morning, with the wild creatures all round, the keen air in your lungs, and your horse's warm coat scenting the glade. The buck will let you approach within fifty yards before they make off; the nilghai nearer; the pig start at your feet. I used to ride an Arab that would turn in his own length and leap at anything that sprang away from him and bite at it in play. Not that he ever overtook any wild thing except pig. The boar, of course, we left alone, and the fox and jackal slipped away from us in the long grass. As spears and guns were not allowed in the *bir*, we amused ourselves by rounding up the black-

buck and the nilghai. It was not a bad substitute for prescribed forms of sport.

In the early morning we steal upon a herd of nilghai. A huge slate-coloured bull stands in our path, his head a little on one side, as if appraising us, showing the white tuft at the throat. The ungainly cows stare at us through the bushes, waiting for a lead. As we approach they swing round clumsily and draw up again in thicker cover behind. Being accounted cows they are held sacred in the State and have no fear, but they are eternally curious. We bore through after them into more open ground. It is not a pursuit so much as a ride in their midst. But they are elusive in spite of their awkwardness. When we think we have lost them we discover them near at hand, staring at us from their secret places as if they had never seen a man or a horse before.

The nilghai lead us on to a herd of blackbuck. In the open they would give us no chance, nor in the *bir* if they were really alarmed. The excitement of the chase lies in the obstacles, the maze of thorn-bushes, the interlacing avenues of Babul, the pig-pits and fallen tree-trunks, and the branches, knotted

and thorny, reaching down from above, so that one has to ride sometimes with one's head on one's pony's neck, and dare not lift it till the shade on the grass is broken by a patch of sunlight. Riding blindfolded like this one has to leave everything to the horse, but my clever little Arab never abused the trust. Where he could pass there was room for me, and he was as keen on being up with the herd as I was. Sometimes we had two or three hundred yards open going, then the brushwood cut off the view again twenty yards ahead, and the broken vistas in it were alive and moving with speckled white and fawn, white ears, white bellies, white rumps and tails ahead, and often a jetty coat behind, the heavy black horns weighing the head back so that there seemed to be some throat-work in every spring. The young does clear every bush with a foot or two to spare, but the buck has turned, and is trotting sedately across our path with a sideways glance at me. It is gallantry. He is trying to draw us off, but the stratagem fails. We prefer the many and pursue. With more than two ponies we can generally round them up in a corner of the *bir*. Then they

must jump the perimeter or break back through our line. Either way the sight is worth the run, for we are in the midst of two or three score of springing does and young buck leaping as high as our horses' withers. We rein in and let them pass with a friendly halloa. Then as we canter lazily behind we put up a sounder of pig and chivy a jinking sow until she is lost in the covert.

There is no melancholy in this. I remember one morning taking out a soldier friend who had been cooped up in Simla for six months on staff work. On the way home we met an old Sikh riding whom neither of us knew. My friend stopped him, and leaning over his saddle to grip his hand, said in excellent Gurmukhi, "Salaam, Sardar-ji. Good morning to you. What fine ground you have got here for a gallop. I've been having an awful time stuck in an office up in the hills. Now I've come down to eat the air. This sahib and I have had jolly good fun."

The old fellow beamed, and I remember thinking that if we were all Irishmen the people of the country might perhaps love us better.

The animals in the *bir* never seemed to grow any wilder; I thought of them settling down again after we had gone. Our invasion was like a stone cast into a pool. It was an abstract of our Indian occupation—our restless Western energies stirring and muddying the still waters of the East, but without any permanent discoloration.

When I returned it was on foot and not as a disturber. The place is such a sanctuary that one can wander among its herds without feeling the itch to destroy. Once inside the perimeter the 'cidal instinct sleeps. Only the partridge with his brave burr of wings brings one's stick to the shoulder. Yet in an hour's walk one may have seen a dozen different kinds of creatures that are shot or hunted—boar, black-buck, nilghai, jackal, fox, wild cat, black partridge and grey, peacock, hare, and quail. And in the cold weather in the corner nearest the city, where the *bir* is skirted by a drain, one flushes snipe. Then, stumbling on a shed tortoise shell or porcupine quill, one remembers that there are other eyes all round watching us unseen. Stalking them on foot in rope-soled boots is almost as good fun as riding after the herd.

One mood is the complement of the other—L'Allegro on horseback and Il Penseroso on foot.

Has the stalking instinct ever been analysed? One feels it even when one is watching the movements of one's own kind from a place of concealment. If the object of one's vigilance is a scout or a keeper, the furtive sense of enjoyment that one feels is intelligible enough. But I must own to a kind of mean satisfaction in watching folk in the street from behind a window, as if seeing them without being seen by them put me in some sort of way on a superior footing. The sensation is quite illogical, unless it can be explained as a vestigial instinct of primitive man left us from days when food and life depended on our being in this relationship to other creatures.

The *bir* is seldom shot over more than once in the year, and the animals are easier to approach there than in the surrounding country. For this reason one's ideal of a successful stalk is higher. It is not enough if a herd move slowly ahead casting uneasy and suspicious glances behind. The buck must be so much at his ease in your presence that he will lie down within fifty yards of the

place where you are concealed. The doe must give suck. The pig must go on with his digging.

The evening is the best time, when every beast is stirring, and there are movements in the bushes and the long grass all round. Down that chequered glade there is something standing in a passage between two stunted plum-trees. The outline is too distinct and the colouring too light for a shrub or a part of a tree. Yet one has watched it some time and it appears fixed. Maybe it is a shaft of light breaking through where the foliage behind is thinner. One is half inclined to pass it by as a dead stump. But it has moved, and it is watching us. The herd will not be far off. It is no good making down that alley; we must work round to them. As we steal along on tiptoe we disturb a hundred unsuspected things. A hare springs up at our feet and we can see the pink light through his ears. A bevy of peahen pass in front of us with a fussy, frightened strut, a pig breaks out of the thicket behind and makes off with a frantic scurry. There is such a stir that there seems no hope of finding the sentinel, whoever he may be, in the

glade where we saw him by the stunted plum-trees. But he is still there, and we have recognised each other. It is the great slate-coloured nilghai bull. We have met in the forest before. If I follow him he will lead me on farther and farther until I am benighted. He never recedes far; he is too inquisitive for that. Wherever he takes his stand he is still looking at me over his shoulders, so low in the quarters and so high in the withers by his scraggy black mane as to appear almost pyramidical. We dodge each other in the thick undergrowth for half an hour or more, continually facing each other in a new position, until it becomes a minuet between the old fellow and myself, and I am tempted to mimic his affected pose. Instead I bow myself off, as who should say, "My friend, I must leave you now, or I shall have no time to call on the others before dark." I know that he will stand there by the bush, just where I left him, dreaming for hours.

My next encounter is with a herd of nilghai cows. A pretty sight—the white insides of the pricked ears and the white tufts at the throat in a forest glade with the yellow gleam of the setting sun on the tree-trunks all round.

Two calves are taking milk, and there is a young bull. I wonder if this family has anything to do with the enigma I have just said good-bye to, and if so, why he is always alone?

In another hollow a jackal is circling round a bush on noiseless pads, intensely alert and expectant, the snout just at the angle which indicates five senses awake. Is it an ambush, I wonder, or an assignation?

A little farther on a huge boar stands four-square in my path. I take care there is no challenge, for he will charge if he thinks I have designs on him. The high grass all round him is moving, and presently an old mud-coloured sow disengages herself from the reeds by a dried-up hollow, which is a pond in the rains. Her "nine farrow" follow in her wake. Other families emerge, walk up to the old boar's pit as if they expected hidden treasure there, and finding none begin to excavate for themselves. It is earnest business, and as far as I can see, there is much toil in it and little profit. They work with a rhythmical sawing motion, putting all their weight—twelve stone it may be or more—into their discoloured tushes. The little

ones press together all round and watch eagerly. As for the issue, it is like watching a man fish. Maybe I am a Jonah, but I have never heard the grunt that proclaims a truffle, or seen such a scramble as would ensue.

It is getting dark. The little squat owls are leaving their hiding-places, and there will be no light to find my way to the road if I do not reveal myself now. I whistle gently; two pigs look up. I say "Hum! Hum!" as only a human may; every head is raised. I declaim solemnly—

"Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is past from the revolving year."

They are dispersed. It is an incantation. As I cast the pearls before them the hammer-headed crew make off in clumsy terror and plunge across the open nullah, grunting and barking in dismay, the whole sounder in full flight.

All the earth is dug into pits by them for miles in every direction, not in the *bir* only but in the gardens outside Roni and in the crops of the neighbouring villages. There is

tragedy in this. Old Jati Ram has sown his field this year with melons. The small plot is all he owns—it and the well with which he has reclaimed it from the burnt rubble all round. The pigs know the green patch well. They have been driven off it five nights in the week for the last three months. But one night the two sons of Jati Kam go to sleep at the same time, and in the morning there is no crop to be seen—only a mash of earth and stalks and leaves.

Sometimes I stalk the beasts on a quiet horse. One gets a wider range of view like this, and where the jungle is thick one can see more of what is going on. One day I watched a battle royal between two buck. I heard the impact of clashing horns, and found them locked and so engrossed that they fought within a few yards of me. It was an even match. They unlocked and receded and butted again with a clash, straining and heaving with every sinew taut. How it would have ended I cannot say, as there was a sudden press to my side of the lists and my horse backed and neighed. For one second I looked into amazed eyes. Then they made off side by side to fight it out else-

where. The lady for whom they engaged was not by, but a peacock, six foot of colour from bill to tail, stood arbiter, and a pig grunted in a thorn-bush by my side.

But, walking or riding, I think the best moments in the *bir* are when one canters into a quiet glade and finds all one's friends, black-buck and peacock and nilghai and pig, at home in one place. Then to pull up behind the nearest thicket, and to watch the starts and reassurances, the stiff wheelings round, the momentary allayments of fear and rigid posturings, until one becomes part of the tail of a moving avenue in precipitate flight, the great cærulean birds flapping awkwardly overhead, and gaining little on one's horse.

When I was last in the *bir* it was spring. Not the spring we know in England, lush and virginal with soft skies and showers, but a season of menace almost. There had not been two inches of rain during the last six months, and if any flower had been hardy enough to push its head above the earth it would have been blighted in the act. Such drought is normal in the Punjab, but the Indian spring does not wait for moisture.

When the sap in the bough is warmed through the fresh green thrusts out. There is verdure and colour in the branches overhead when the earth is baked hardest. Nature has these resources, and employs them like a cynic.

It was the second week of April and there was not a flower on the ground or a green blade of grass. But the *dhak* jungle, or flame of the forest, was in blossom, the most prodigal growth of the year. It is difficult to describe its effect on Englishmen

> "Who love old hymning night,
> And know the Dryad voices well."

Colour appeals to one elsewhere in various ways. A hillside of heather is a good thing to look at, and a Kentish wood when the wild hyacinths flood it like the sea, an Alpine slope in gentian time, an orchard of apple-blossom by the side of a stream in Brittany, marsh-marigolds in the Waveney valley, and the rhododendron forest under the snows. To have seen these things affects one always: even to write a list of endowed places is refreshing; to think that one will see them again is enough to make one in love with

life. But the *dhak* jungle appeals to one differently. For sheer gross wealth, for colour and sheen in the bulk, there is nothing in nature to compare with it. Break off a brittle branch: the flowers are packed together in heavy clusters, each one a prism of colour, orange and salmon merging into scarlet, silky and cool, of exquisite texture, with a calyx of velvety green so dark as to appear almost black in the distance. It is an insolent display amidst the poverty all round. There is nothing in Europe so grand. Each tree is a flaming scarlet screen. As one looks down on the whole forest from a high mound it seems to move in the dancing heat rays. Vast battalions are approaching in echelon. The Mahrattas have a story that in the old days a party of their scouts mistook a forest for the scarlet of British troops, and rode off as if Birnam wood were come to Dunsinane.

As one stands and admires the slant sun is getting higher. Its rays creep down into one's spine until one feels a fit of nausea, and one knows that every day in the next three months the heat will become more intense. That is the message of spring. All this green is spasmodic,

a flash in the pan. There is something so ominously inconsiderate in it all that it touches one's awe. One feels like an impoverished courtier. Here is a prince scattering his untimely and extravagant largess, a shower of gold to starving men, when there is no milk in the land, or honey or corn.

In England there would be an anthology of the *dhak*, but the Indian is not grateful. Why should he be? There is something hostile and alien for him in the march of the seasons. The very birds chirp in monotones, and repeat a song as sad and void of hope as his philosophy. Earth is a sad nurse and he bears with her stoically. At the best she hardens him into an armistice with her forces, and in the North, where the air is dry and keen, gives grit to the Rajput and the Jat. At the worst, in moist tracts, she bears men who are stealthy and morose, gloomy and serpentine as the forest that teems round them.

The love of earth does not quicken their pulses; they have no sense for loveliness. The people notice just the few things whose beauty is sensuously apparent, and their literature is sprinkled with allusions to birds with brilliant plumage and flowers with rich scent. It has

become the tradition to show a kind of objective regard for these things; one must have images in verse. But Indian poetry does not dwell on the beauty of flowers that have no fragrance, and householders do not gather them. When they pluck the jasmine or the rose for their festivals, the buds are broken off at the calyx and threaded into garlands without stalk or leaf, or scattered, bruised and maimed, on the floor. Paper flowers dyed and dipped in their respective scents please them more, and appear more wonderful. They have no brotherhood with the woods and flowers and beasts and birds unless it is in suffering. They can never hear Triton, or listen to the rustle of the dryads in the trees, or wander in the woods of Westermain.

As the birds of a country, so is the heart of man. The nightingale and the brain-fever bird welcome spring each after his own fashion, and according to the joy or pain that is in his heart.

I do not think the Englishman would feel so drawn to the jungle if he had not his tendrils in the earth elsewhere. Half his joy in it is translated reminiscence, as when he catches the ghost of the scent of hay or the

wet smell of the earth after rain, and a sense is touched in him which broadens into a sympathy with all animate nature. It is a kind of dumb inspiration, half physical in its sensitiveness. And it is autochthonous, bred in the bone of him. You will not find it among people who are born where earth is unkind.

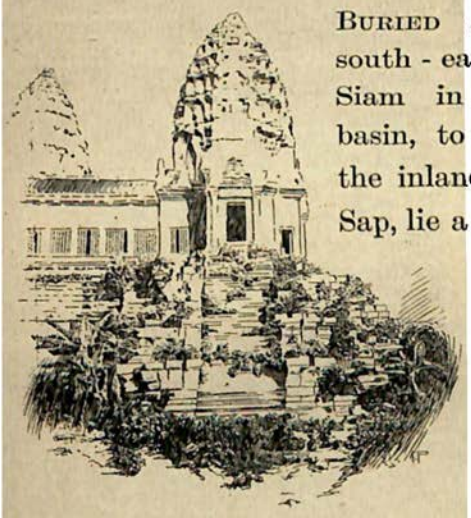
The Englishman must have become something of an exile before an Indian spring appeals to him. For the first year or two, when he watches the quickening of the sap, he is thrown back on the old country, cowslips and cuckoo flowers under the blackthorn spray, grey moths in the sallows and the thrush at the top of her note. The hardier, stringier things that are coming into life all round, despite the parched earth, are forgotten. He has no eye or heart for them. Birds strident, impudent, and insistent have no claim. But after a year or two he may become attuned to them even. The season will grow on him. The things that recur with it will take colour from associations until he comes in time almost to welcome the feel of it in his pores.

But after all, it is a thin vicarious kind of comfort that earth instils in these burnt plains,

an uncertain attachment at the best, and the exile knows it is not the real thing. The happy day will come as the seasons revolve when he will tread again the soft moss of an English wood. Then he will know what he owes the soil. Let him be in England when earth unlocks her heart in spring. The clay bank starred with primroses, the orchard with its daffodil floor, the starwort and the wood-anemone — these are earth's messages to him. And the zest he carries with him over the world is his reply, the response she demands. He enters the woods again as an initiate. The windflower is at his feet, and the spray of periwinkle, just where he remembers it, escaped from some cottage garden across the valley. By-and-by he will stumble on some humble friend he has forgotten. In a sunny opening where the wood-cutters have been at work there is a rich patch of emerald. It is the dog's mercury. He has not thought of the small green flower for nine years. But his heart is too full for remorse. All the woodland is his kin,—the dog's mercury, and the wood-sorrel, and the brown squirrel, and the crimson-eyed pheasant, and all the gauzy, furry, silky things that go by familiar names.

It is because he has grown up with them and breathed the same air that he knows nature for his friend and is glad to be alive. And that is why I often think there ought to be an oak grove at Dover and a Druid under some immemorial tree to scatter leaves on us when we return, and to receive our oath—surely an inviolable one—to the dear earth to whom we owe what loyalty or love we may inherit.

ANGKOR, A PILGRIMAGE.



Angkor-Thôm.

BURIED away in the south-east corner of Siam in the Mekong basin, to the north of the inland sea of Tonlé Sap, lie a forgotten city, and a temple, without doubt the greatest and most beautiful in Asia. If the city were known to Englishmen its name would be on all men's tongues, and newspapers would profane it daily, calling all great and mysterious shrines the "Angkor of the West" or the "Angkor of the New

World," as the case might be. But it has been spared the metonymic headline, though in France Angkor is a household word.

Nearly ten years ago I made the pilgrimage to Angkor Wat. Landing at Tavoy I struck across the Burmese frontier, travelling by elephant to the Tennasserim River, then down stream in a dug-out canoe as far as Sinbyoodine. Here I left the river and struck west over that picturesque barrier of hills which divides Burma from Siam. Once over the frontier my Karen coolies began to desert, but in spite of their defection, a total ignorance of any language the people of the country could understand, and an equally complete bankruptcy in currency of the realm,—for the Indian rupees I took with me were not held good,—I found myself in a few weeks in Bangkok. A crazy bullock-cart, some dug-out canoes, a sampan, and finally a steam-launch, were implicated in my arrival. I left the capital in a Siamese junk, which deposited me with other undesirables at the little mining port of Chantaboun. Thence north on foot, with coolies for transport, to Phairin, a steamy basin in the hills, rich in sapphires and rubies, but famous for being the most malarious death-

trap in the East. From Phairin northward again on horseback over a waterless country to Battambong, whence a sinuous little river of the same name winds into the Tonlé Sap. I followed the stream into the great lake, traversed the north-west corner of it, then up another stream between an avenue of alders, or similar trees, burdened with flocks of brilliant aquatic birds, herons, kingfishers, adjutants, flamingoes, and the like, who watched my progress with attentive tolerance to the village of Siem Rep and the very gates of Angkor.

The journey was rough and devious. But now looking back on it the whole incident has taken a perfectly smooth perspective, like a long green drive in a wood with a glittering shrine at the end. That is Angkor's doing. And though ten years have passed, the image I took away with me has not been, and could not have been, gilded in the interval. I should state this explicitly, for a journey is often born of dreams and in the end reverts into them. The actual experience is a mere interlude; the dreams endure and become in time a very substantial fabric. Yet if we could look back on the past with clear eyes and see without illusions all that the alchemy of it has sprinkled

over with gold-dust, we might well smile cynically. For, divested of this tinsel, the voyages we dwell upon most fondly have been sometimes the grimmest of pilgrimages. All desert and remote places seem romantic in retrospect, but how many of them held any glamour when our ego and its needs were the centre and focus of them, when the immediate care was a dinner or transport for to-morrow?

And this glow that illumines so warmly the places won with greatest toil in our huddled and confused memories of voyaging, like the sun lightening the highest peaks of a tumbled mountain-chain, is not a phenomenon peculiar to travel, but a part of all experience. Everything acted and done with is transmuted by it, the more fondly as the severance is more complete.

So it is not safe to review with any finality these wanderings beyond the outposts of civilisation, and to say this place or the other was a paradise to end one's days in. For the figure of the sun on the mountains is true throughout. At daybreak the snow-peaks are rose-tinted—that is, one grasps at a journey with eager hope. And in the day itself, be it

bright or dull, there is the searching reality. Then at twilight this is all swept away and once more the peaks are rose-coloured, suffused with the glow of this alchemist, artist, optimist god, who transfigures everything except the instant "Now."

But briefly the origin of travel is dreams. One is restless and toys with maps, one dreams dreams, takes some practical step and is committed. Some men are content to let their visions pass into the air like wreaths of smoke. Others, the fanatics of travel, are lured by them impulsively; they tread buoyantly these airy citadels. But to take a step to meet them is to accept their challenge; after that there is no turning back. It is as if one had made a vow to a saint to build a shrine or make a pilgrimage in consideration of some reprieve. It may be, to be delivered from the haunts of men similar to oneself, to be projected from this common place to that unknown and presumably desirable one. But whatever it be, the vow is binding to most honest fellows, who, sooner than they think, feel the flints grow sharp about their feet, and find that the only joy in the pilgrimage is the fierce exaltation of seeing it through.

Nevertheless there are places in the East with a spell to which one must be instantly subject, places which can gain little from the alchemy I have spoken of. Hitt is one of these and Hilleh; and there are Kengham and Lhasa and Phari-jong and Kanburi, and many other strange and hidden places I could call to mind. But on me, as no doubt on any other white man who has seen it, Angkor Wat has exercised a greater spell than any place on earth. So that whenever I read of, or hear any casual talk of, the "call," "mystery," or "fascination" of the East, I see Angkor at once with its deserted terraces and causeways and its extraordinary unimaginable secret, a splendid brave old ruin, showing no traces of any human meddling for the last thousand years, but fighting inch by inch its grim interminable battle of twenty centuries with the forest trees.

And who could help being haunted by that slow-moving epic of which the protagonists are so Titanic, Angkor and the sacred Ficus, —Angkor, superb and aloof, with its incommunicable glories, a desolate survival of some great unexplained energies that have vanished from the earth; and the Ficus tree, the shadows

of whose branches, arched and embossed like a cathedral, have caressed the shrine for centuries, while its roots have spread their slow and secret ruin? There are no witnesses of the struggle save the wild things and one or two sleepy priests; and the movement is so slow that one feels there can be no rancour in it, for nothing animate or conscious, unless it be the wild elephants, can live long enough to mark any new victory to the destroyer. I like to feel, rather, that the Ficus has been visited on Angkor, and the caress of its shadow and the caress of its roots are such inveterate associations, so dear to the lonely genius of the place, that the coming of any other agent of dissolution would be as distressing to Angkor as to its votaries.

But I am dreaming, and if I am not cautious may be taken for a romancer in spite of my care to show how thoroughly on my guard I am against those refining snares of the memory that trick us so often into bearing false witness. I am too earnest a votary of Angkor not to resent any suggestion of additions; exaggeration would be as hateful as a tawdry modern flag hung on the battlements. I only wish to make it clear that while I was

at Angkor I was then and there devoted to the place, and that no after visions have haloed round that first image; that as my feet were echoing on its age-worn flagstones I was feeling all the while, "This is Angkor, a dream city, the most mysterious and vaguely eloquent place on earth": not "Is this Angkor—is this all?"

I slept in the ruins two moonlight nights. Directly the sun sank innumerable bats swept along the corridors with a rushing sound like a great wind. The smell of them was like some fœtid incense to age and decay. Then when they were still I could hear the gentle stir of the palm leaves inside the walls. The moon had silvered them, and their rustle through some subtle fancy seemed softly metallic. Now and again an owl wailed hideously from a tree by the moat. I was once startled by a priest, seeing him before hearing him. The quiet old man glided with noiseless feet like a shadow. He lit a taper before a wooden image of Buddha, a thing perhaps not more than a hundred years old, part of the parasitic worship of the place. He passed me without word or look; even in daylight I was a thing outside his contemplation.

Then there were other noises, sounds without reason. I feared snakes. Surely the sacred cobra must coil here at night in the cool passages, where the Naga was reverenced centuries before the birth of Christ, where his image in stone, hood erect, guards the entrance of every sacred place.

By the main causeway there was a bamboo *zayat* for pilgrims, where I, the most enduring of them, if miles traversed are held for merit, had cast my profane chattels. Here I turned to sleep, but lay half awake for hours spell-bound, haunted by that fancy of the day, feeling that all round me the silent ceaseless battle was being waged, and seeming to hear some faint labouring of the stones, the gripping of the Titans, Angkor and the sacred Ficus.

And surely there is nothing outside Milton's theme that is comparable in measure or import with this epic. What are the struggles of nations, conquest by the sword, sovereignty, subjection, throes of onset, beside the slow eternal wave of destiny symbolised here, that immutable indifferent void, that in-drawing arc of oblivion which closes impartially on all strife and has numbered the years of the sun!

At Angkor one can measure the encroachment more distinctly than is possible in countries which we call civilised, where small happenings as wars and revolutions distract us from universal truths. Here written and sculptured on the walls we can read the record of man's pride, how five hundred years before the birth of Christ Prea-thong, son of the sovereign of Indrapat, now Delhi, revolted against his father, was defeated, and banished; then with his army of followers broke across the Southern continent, devastated, destroyed, created, and was only checked in his eastward course by the marshes of the Mekong Valley and the Tonlé Sap. Here he conquered the Khomen, the then inhabitants of the country, and with them became merged in that extraordinary race which we now call the Kmers. But these Hindus, before the national type became assimilated and lost in this new race-blend, built the city of Angkor, and the temple which they dedicated to Siva, the destroyer, figuring him in their ignorance with thunderbolts and eyes of flame like a malignant fury, not understanding that shocks and violence are the least terrible energies of destruction. Yet perhaps if these old Brahmins could return

and see this Angkor which they built and consecrated to one destroyer, crumbling at the hands of another, they might fashion a new god; and the Siva that the wisdom of the twentieth century would create might be more awful than the other, menacing with no penalties by which any imaginable evils could be expiated, but passive as Buddha, relentless and expressionless as the illimitable void.

But this Siva without fangs, the unseen impalpable destroyer, would be a conception to paralyse all effort. So that if the Kmers had any presentment of such a god they would not have built Angkor; or they would have built it sadly, knowingly, without pride, as one might say, "Accept this our offering, the monument of our littleness. For even this Angkor, the work of a race, the labour of centuries, is as a grain of chaff, to be swept away at thy nod."

But that was not the spirit of these Aryan invaders, whose gods fought by their side, drove chariots, and were as intimately involved in the national campaigns as those of Troy. Humility in the East is a Buddhist growth, and it was not until the philosophy of Sakya Muni penetrated to the Tonlé Sap that the building

of Angkor was checked. Five hundred years after the birth of Christ, when the work was completed, it seems, save for the chiselling of a single pillar, the sacred Buddhist books were introduced into Cambodia from Ceylon and the temple was given over to the new cult. With the new influence the religious aspirations of the Kmers were idealised, they were filled with a sense of the pervading vanity of things, and the motive of this monumental labour vanished. For it is only among proudly materialised races like the Egyptians, Aztecs, Assyrians, and ancient Hindus that these mountains of elaborate architecture have been raised.

Angkor then owes little to the Buddhists save that their tolerance has left the great temple nearly intact. It is strange to think that these ministers of gentle faith, whose only prayer is peace and the realisation of the sanctity of life, have passed to their devotions so many years along these cloisters, where every inch of wall pictures a riot of carnage,—Rama and Hanuman drawing bows, slashing swords, thrusting savagely with knives, in the wildest fury and hate, or kings going out to war with chariots and horses and legions of footmen, and drawing in their train everything

frightful or noble among beasts — elephant, horse, ox, crocodile, and rhinoceros, — three thousand feet of intricate figures inexorably devoted to the pride of conquest. For this place, so peaceful and remote, is haunted more than any other place on earth with the sense of dead strife, titanic labourings to no lasting purpose, it seems, save a casual holocaust of human lives. And to-day, while a few passive devotees dream away their lives in this *milieu*, the Hindus who conceived it all, concerning themselves in their brief existence only with the engines of terrorism and death, have passed away from the face of the earth, leaving no trace of their influence on the races who absorbed them.

With these epic fragments in my head and confused moralisings I fell asleep, a huddled anachronism, on the *zayat* floor; and after a few hours dreaming rose with the sun to seize a last glimpse of the temple before setting out to explore the crumbling palaces scattered around in the jungle — Bapuon, Bayon, Pimean-Acas, — all that remains of Angkor-Thôm, the capital of this lost race. I climbed the outer staircase — inner there was none — on to the third

terrace where the three great pagodas dominate the encroaching forest. Below me lay the second and third terraces, cloistered courts with innumerable monolithic pillars, open within to the light of day, every passage a vaulted gallery of bas-reliefs with image-houses scattered symmetrically to north and south. Then beyond, the great enclosure choked with palm-trees, intersected with raised causeways of flagstone, with shrines on either side, sacristies perhaps, or buildings dedicated to some special rite. All this ringed by an outer wall, a mile or more of masonry surmounting a broad moat, rank with lotus and frequented by coot and whistling teal.

The main causeway leads through the western gate across a bridge that spans the moat. Through this I passed to Angkor-Thôm, where all this grandeur is repeated in fragments. The city is scattered over miles. One breaks through a thicket and comes upon a wall of bas-relief. A king with helmet, sword, and corselet is being drawn in a triumphal car; a tortoise is swimming in a lake; a divinity holds out a lotus flower. One looks up and meets the gaze of a huge Brahmanic

face in haut-relief, intact though, draped with creepers and parasites.

Then one stumbles against a massive gateway through which elephants have passed to war; gross shapes of warriors peep above the lintel; on either side of the porch are stone chambers where stood the guard. The gate is topped by a pagoda-tower with progressively decreasing layers, richly ornamented, every ledge culminating in the sacred Naga, seven-headed, fan-shaped, hood erect, or the eagle of Vishnu, man-headed and intertwined with serpents. Here a troupe of demons afflict the damned. There the immense serpent forms a balustrade supported by squat bowmen. The elephant head of Ganesh sleeps under a green canopy. No one has bent the knee to that worthy old forgotten god for the last thousand years.

Then as one strains through the thick tropical tangle one may come upon an unexpected village. A tinkling cow-bell, or the drone of some sleepy herdsman, may reveal it nearer than one thought. Here is the path, rank with the aromatic *Lantanum*. A few steps and one finds a scene that compels moralising. For to-day when the Cambodian builds a house

he drives four piles into the earth, or perhaps six or eight, not more, and stretches across them a bamboo floor. This, with four walls and a slanting roof, also of bamboo, completes his architectural ambition — a draughty cow-shed on stilts. Villages built in this way stand among the ruins of the ancient Kmers. No wonder, then, the natives say Angkor was built by the gods. We ourselves are not so immeasurably wiser, though in Paris the Musée Kmer is devoted to the lost civilisation, and the Frenchmen, Abel Remusat, Mouhot, Doudard de Lagrée, Garnier, Delaporte, Barth, Aumonier, and Fournereau have written volumes on the subject.[1]

I should explain that my own journey was the harum-scarum adventure of a boy who knew nothing about architecture or ethnology or Asiatic lore, but was simply captured by the glamour of the thing. Notes and investi-

[1] When the province of Battambong, Siem Rep, and Sisophon came under French rule by the Franco-Siamese Treaty of March 1907, an impetus was given the cult of Angkor in Paris, and a society was formed for the preservation of the temples. The committee includes the most representative men among French Orientalists, archæologists, artists, professors, and public men. The Secretary of the Société d'Angkor is M. Finot, 11 Rue Poussin, Paris.

gations! I took none, made none, never dreamed of making any! Intelligent inquiry, I confess, would have bored me. Mouhot I had read cursorily, and attributed his amazing flow of rhetoric to "the Frenchman's way." But when I reached London I spent some days at the British Muséum, and was amazed to find that Angkor had been measured with a foot-rule.

At first I resented it. And unreasonably, you may well say. For being jealous of the shrine, I ought to have understood that my own inarticulate wonder and dreamy reverence were poor offerings beside this man's foot-rule and note-book. Supposing we both wished to spread the cult of Angkor, were both missionaries in a sense, as most men wish to be who cherish any incommunicable vision. And supposing we were questioned about Angkor by an unbeliever. I could only gape and babble of a miracle, while the other would be quoting chapter and verse. I can imagine the catechism.

"And is the temple of this god you mention very great? is it as great as St Paul's?"

I could only stammer, "Vastly greater.

From end to end is farther than the stoutest archer could send an arrow."

But the wise votary would say—

"The causeway which leads to the main entrance of the temple is 725 feet in length, and is paved with stones measuring four feet in length and two in breadth. The outer wall, about half a mile square, is built of sandstone, with gateways upon each side, which are handsomely carved with gods and dragons, arabesques and intricate scrolls. Upon the western side is the main gateway, and passing through this, and up a causeway for a distance of a thousand feet, you arrive at the main entrance of the temple. The foundations of Angkor Wat are ten feet in height, and massively built of volcanic rock. The entire edifice, which is raised on three terraces, the one about thirty feet above the other, including the roof, is of stone, but without cement, and so closely fitting are the joints as even now to be scarcely discernible. The shape of the building is oblong, being 796 feet in length and 588 feet in width, while the highest central pagoda rises some 250 feet above the ground, and four others at the angles of the court are each about 150 feet in height."

Then the unbeliever, impressed, would ask—

"And is the temple of this god beautiful? Is it sculptured and ornamented like the cathedral of Amiens?"

Here the impotence of words would be an agony to me. But the man of deeds, now my ally, would be ready with his hard gospel of facts.

"The gallery of sculpture, which forms the exterior of the temple, consists of over half a million of continuous pictures, cut in basso-relievo upon sandstone slabs six feet in width, and representing subjects taken from the Hindu mythology. Entire scenes from the Ramayana are pictured, one of which occupies 240 feet of the wall. On the walls are sculptured the immense number of 100,000 separate figures."

So I came to treasure these statistics, learnt them by rote, and came in time almost to believe that I had measured Angkor myself. Equipped with this testament I might speak out boldly of the shrine and crush the incredulous with the weight of facts. I remembered the idle curiosity with which I had turned over Mouhot's pages before the pilgrimage, how casually I had listened to his outpourings.

"A la vue de ce temple l'esprit se sent écrasé, l'imagination surpassée," he had written, with all moderation as I learnt afterwards, and in the fulness of his heart. But to me the words had seemed vain, the speech of a blind seer, a Nabi; they conjured up nothing save an impatient glimpse of an excited Frenchman. The thought of this injustice made me timid in speaking of Angkor. To others who had not seen my words also might appear vain. I was not more ardent, deserved no better, than this Mouhot who had left me so cynically cold and sceptical. Clearly if I wished any one to believe me I must be more reticent. I would be guarded. Then I discovered the disciple with the foot-rule and had only to say "Amen."

But that was ten years ago. To-day there ought to be no need of proselytising. Do you claim that there is any other shrine half so grand and impressive, listen to the burning words of the pilgrims Garnier and Mouhot. Do you deny that Angkor was the cradle of a race of kings, turn to the bas-reliefs, read the inscriptions in Kmer and Sanscrit translated by the Orientalists Barth and Aumonier. Are you sceptical about the splendour, extent,

and astonishing beauty of the place, scan the measurements of Vincent, then turn to the sumptuous tomes of Fournereau and Porcher, spread out the hundred plates, and bow the knee converted.

Still, in spite of all this literature and investigation, there is much mystery veiling the history of Angkor which Orientalists have been unable to penetrate. These Kmers were half Hindus, and derived, one might think, their architectural inspirations from Hindu sources. In many respects the designs of Prea-thong and his descendants are identical with those of Hindustan. Yet there are some essential characteristics, the arch and vaulted roof for instance, which are not traceable to Aryan models. The Kmers owed nothing to China, nor could they have been inspired by the Khomen, the original inhabitants of the land. What then is the origin of these traits? And how are we to account for the extraordinary analogies that Fournereau has traced between the Kmer and the Egyptian temples and the Kmer and Assyrian sculpture and bas-reliefs? That is a secret which the stones of Angkor have not revealed.

Angkor has played me the same trick as it

did Mouhot. It has lured me into rhodomontades. I can only babble incoherently of its charm. I have not attempted to describe its architecture. And this is not because I cannot see the shrine and remember, as I think, every stone and curve of it, but because I would have no joy in the task, even if I could succeed. To me the appeal of the place is purely emotional; I have fallen under the spell and wish others to feel its intensity. I simply proclaim the pre-eminence of Angkor over all other shrines. I am the Nabi on whom has descended Mouhot's mantle, the muezzin on the tower. Maybe there are folk listening in the street who will hear the call and distinguish in my voice the ring of truth.

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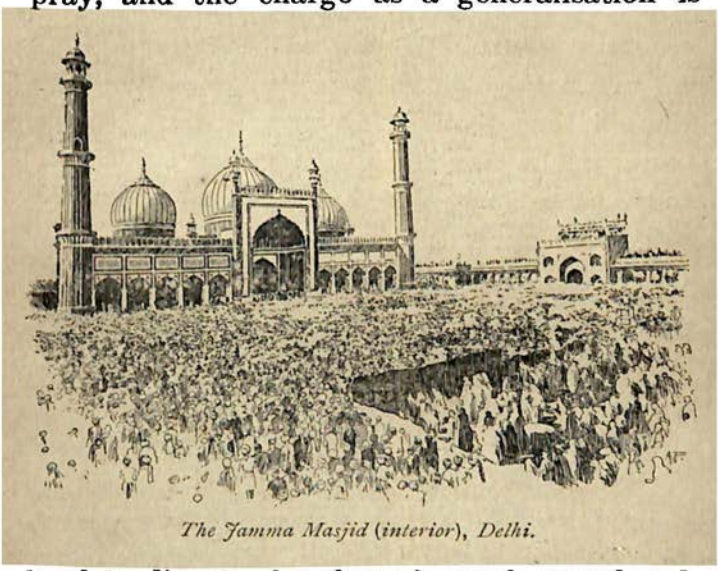
THE JAMMA MASJID.

THE Moslems say that the Christian cannot pray, and the charge as a generalisation is



The Jamma Masjid (interior), Delhi.

hard to dispute, for there is much casual and perfunctory worship in churches. Our attitude of prayer is often a compromise. The Lao-

dicean wishes to be reverent when he addresses his Maker, but at the same time he is afraid of creasing his trousers. So he neither sits nor kneels, but lolls forward in his pew with as much concern for his coat-tails as his nether garments. The Moslem cannot reconcile this position with prayer. He is never familiar in the House of God. He prides himself on the spot of mud or gravel on his forehead which marks the fervour of his devotions. This is true not of the devout only; every son of Islam worships in the same manner, with the same intense concentration, and as he gazes towards the Kaaba he feels that he is standing in the Durbar of God.

The Jamma Masjid at Delhi answers Burton's description of the mosque at Mecca. It is "grand and simple, the expression of a single sublime idea." It is in large open spaces, in broad and clean courts, in the bright light of the sun that man appeals most sincerely to God. The Moslems do not approach their Maker darkly or in any timid or huckstering spirit. The mosque is designed for the expansion of the soul. The plan of it was conceived in the desert and inspired by an illimitable horizon. There is nothing obscure or fantastic

about it. It contains no images or tortuous designs.

Shah Jehan built the Jamma Masjid on a rock, but the masons worked so cunningly that you would think the giant basement, 30 ft. high and 1400 square yards in area, was their own foundation. The rock stands outside the city fronting the fort, so that the mosque is not cramped or hidden among meaner buildings. It stands out as a landmark, the visible heart of the place.

One steamy Friday morning in August I went to the masjid to watch the Muhammadans at prayer. I arrived there two hours before the service. The sky was the colour of gun-metal, and distant thunder rumbled threateningly. Presently a few drops spattered on the court. Then the rain fell with slow deliberate insistence, with the hidden gleam of metallic sunshine in it, and the shadows of the minarets lay glimmering on the red sandstone in one piece with the substance, striated here and there with veins where the flags joined. The golden spire in the air, and the mirrored image of it, lay in one straight line at the same distance from the base.

The main fabric of the mosque, the walls,

domes, cloisters, courtyard are of red sandstone, the points and salient features of white marble. The two great minarets are veined with white marble in the shape of elongated oars, the blade pointing upwards. Their reflections quivering on the floor as the rain pattered on them outshone the substance.

The slow rain did not make the air any cooler. The flags seemed to absorb it and then perspire. In the intervals where the puddles had dried one could almost see and hear the steam rise.

Already at eleven a few stragglers sat or slept on the marble praying-flags in the arcades. Many of them were strangers from the distant frontiers of India, men whose eyes tell of a life remote from kickshaws and baubles, passed amidst the hills where the breath of the apostle stirs the disciples like a gust among the leaves, men who pray on foot and on horseback. It must have been some green-turbaned, snowy-bearded old patriarch like the one leaning against the pillar who incited the Khusrogis to revolt. They listened to him one moonless night as the British were marching through their valley. It was just the flicker of an ember that made

all the difference. As the fire was dying out a brand rolled over and lighted up the group and gave a wilder light to the prophet's eyes as he denounced the degenerate sons of Islam. From such stock have Mahdis sprung.

A moulvie of the mosque drew me aside to a relic-house in the north cloister, where he showed me a red hair of the prophet's beard, a slipper he had worn, a print of his foot in stone, and some text of the Koran in the handwriting of the martyred Ali and his son Hussain. The relics had been brought into India by Timur.

At twelve I was led to my point of observation on the tower over the east gateway. The people of the city were beginning to pour into the mosque. Soon every praying space in the cloisters was taken up, and the great courtyard began to fill. The praying-mats were thrown on the wet flags; those who had none knelt in the puddles. The stream from the north and south gates grew in volume, and when the Imam mounted the pulpit men came in running; shopkeepers, clerks, lawyers, doctors, artisans, all left their work to pray. It was the blood in the arteries of the place pulsing to the heart.

I looked down upon a level sea of turbans. A few freshets were moving on its surface, the pious prelude to the rhythmic swell. The whole multitude were hushed in expectation. Then the muezzin from the tower called the Azan, and the cry went up from the worshippers in one voice.

When the echo had died away the Imam mounted the pulpit, and the tremendous words of the Khutbah rang out clear and resonant.

"Can ye stay on fire for any length of time? Why heed ye not? Your hearts are harder than stone, for out of the bosom of stone sweet fountains gush, while ye listen and heed not.

"Why heed ye not? It is He who has moulded you in the womb, He who has given you ears and eyes and hearts,—He the All-Powerful, the Wise, the Resistless. And ye heed not.

"Can ye stay on fire for any length of time? He is the All-Powerful Protector of the innocent. He is the Resistless Scourge of the guilty. He is the Glorious Sovereign who has created all things and given them form. His praises are sung on earth and in the heavens at the time of the awakening of the birds. And ye heed not.

"There is no one worthy of adoration but He. And Muhammad — blessings be on his soul — is His true Apostle and Messenger. Sons of Adam arise, and remember——"

The sermon ended, the Imam called the *takbir*, "Allâho-Akbar, Allâho-Akbar." The sea of white bodies rose with one impulse, thousands of white backs and turbans all in a line like serried breakers poised to fall. As the cry went up from the pulpit the crests swayed forward as one; they were suspended a moment between the erect and prone; then at a word they rose again and sank to earth, every brow pressed to the marble of the flags, not a head to be seen of that vast multitude, only the soles of the feet, — a hundred thousand white stones on the sea-shore, an illimitable flock of sheep in repose, or a magic granary in romance awaiting the enchanter's wand for some mystic transformation. Again the words were spoken, and a reanimating thrill pulsed through. They rose with a solemn stir and rustle, like ghosts in their winding-sheets on the day of doom.

All the while the service was going on belated worshippers came flocking in. They made a hasty ablution in the marble tank in

the centre of the courtyard, and fell into line. I felt that I was in the centre of Islam, which was indeed the case. The banks of the Jumna have always been the Muhammadan stronghold in Hindustan. From the embattled parapet of the tower over the east gateway one surveys a great expanse of ruined cities pressed together or superimposed as the hungry generations "trod one another down." Forty-five square miles are covered with their tombs, so that one cannot walk or ride anywhere without blundering upon them. They are the relics of the strife of Islam.

Studded over the plain rise the mausolea of emperors and kings, each the citadel of its own necropolis, where the relatives they assassinated, the women they loved or put away, the soldiers and courtiers who fell by intrigue, treachery, or caprice, or whose adherence cost them their lives, lie around, witnesses of their passing greatness.

In the background of time, ages before Islam, the Pandava heroes of the Mahabharata fought in the plain, and were succeeded by the Chohan kings of Indrapat. The name still clings to the site in the ruins of old Delhi, but all traces of the Hindu régime lie buried under

the strata of six Islamic dynasties. The Kutub Minar, which one sees rising superbly above the purple wooded horizon in the south, was built by Kutub-ud-Din, the first slave king of Delhi, in 1206. A hundred years later the Pathan dynasty of Khilgi flourished, and despoiled the old Hindu temples, using the débris of idols to pave their mosques. The Tughlak, Saiyad, Lodi dynasties succeeded over the space of two centuries, with many invasions and interregna, until in 1494 the Moghal star rose under Babar. It set for ever in 1857, when Hodgson dragged the old Emperor, Muhammad Shah, from his lurking-place in Humayun's tomb. The Jamma Masjid stands in a line betwen two towers. Eleven miles to the south the Kutub Minar marks the beginning of the Muhammadan supremacy. Two miles to the north the Mutiny memorial marks its close, the passing of the last phantom of its sway.

Every Friday in the mosques of Islam hundreds of thousands of Muhammadans nourish the flame that has ravaged three continents. If empires are still built on the foundations of faith, one would think that the sons of the prophet must inherit the earth, but they

are weakened like other communities by sects and schisms. In another mosque outside the city men are laying the palms of their hands on their thighs as they look towards Mecca instead of folding them on their breasts. These are the Shiahs who acknowledge no Imam but Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet, and his direct descendants. In moments of controversy they hate the Sunnis with more passion than disciples of opposing faiths. When they meet them in the Mohurrum carrying their long-bannered poles and chanting hymns in praise of Abu Bakr, Omar, and Osman, they are moved to the shedding of blood.

The moslems are making for cohesion, but in spite of all one hears of the Pan-Islamic movement, it is hard to believe that the missionaries will be able to bring its dismembered units into anything like an organised body. In addition to the main schism there are countless other lines of cleavage, religious and political, by which Islam is divided against itself in its different centres. Sometimes one feels that there is an element of disintegration in the faith as certain in its workings as the sterilising functions in

nature which provide against the over-production of the species. Then at other times, when one looks down on the seething mass in the courtyard swaying with one accord, one forgets the strife that has rent Islam, the ignoble causes its name has served, the abhorrence felt for one another by rival families and sects; one only feels that nowhere save in the mosques of the faithful will one see such vast aspiring multitudes so closely united in a common religious ideal.

WILD-FOWL AND PARLAKIMEDI.

"Here happy souls (their blessed bowers
Free from the rude resort
Of beastly people) spend the hours
In harmless mirth and sport."

—MICHAEL DRAYTON.

THE rather inane question, "Do you like India?" may as a rule be answered summarily by a monosyllable. The answer depends less on the person than on the place where he is cast, for the varieties of life met with in India, the different kinds of interest, work, and sport, and the different conditions of climate and degrees of comfort and the reverse, are incalculable. The question may mean, "Do you like Dera Ismail Khan, Coconada, or Quilon?" yet the answer must infer a vague generalisation. India is everything and nothing, and everything between. There are places where life is an idyll, places where it is made just endurable by the

prospect of furlough, places where one feels that one's own particular case ought to be set beside the stories of Marsyas and Sisyphus in a classical dictionary, and places so hideous and unattractive that to escape from them one might consent to be immured permanently in a new mahogany-and-brass-fitted public-house outside Clapham Junction, if only to watch life through the windows.

Every one has his own peculiar social ideals, and takes his own intellectual equipment with him wherever he goes, but to content the ordinary man the country must provide somewhere to ride or at least a good deal to shoot. If there is plenty of room to let a horse out and good shooting as well, and if in addition to these advantages the place has some natural beauty of its own and a certain sylvan, or desert, as well as human charm, the dweller there can pity folk who dwell anywhere else; and the retired Anglo-Indian who has had the wit or luck to live in such a place, though only for a short time, when he is asked the trite old question, "Do you like India?" will unhesitatingly answer "Yes." For by a special providence that accounts for all that is optimistic in man,

such places live in the mind when the horror of a clammy backwater in Bengal or one's own particular gridiron elsewhere is forgotten.

Of course this is prefatory to an appreciation, a eulogy it may be, of a certain sequestred valley and haunt of wild-fowl which I always think of when people ask me if I like India. It is Parlakimedi in Ganjam. A beautiful name worthy of the place, and not to be pronounced with the English "a" as if it were a new kind of indoor game, but with the soft Hunterian "a" and a purring "r" as a Scotchman would pronounce "pearl," the second accent being on the antepenultimate syllable. Parlakimedi, as if the word had been conceived by a poet to lend music to his hexameters—

"Deep in the bosky shade of the Parlakimedi valleys."

If you want to see India as it has been the last few thousand years go to Parlakimedi. It is true there is a new college and a brand-new palace, but these toys look as if some meddler had introduced them just to see if they were any good, and as if the honest folk, finding they were not, had left them there looking as incongruous as a model of a

Hottentot village stuck in a glass exhibition house. Big as they are they are too much by-the-way to make the place look hybrid; rather, they are so palpably incidental that they emphasise the inveterate Brahminism of Parlakimedi — that is to say, the constitutional inability of the inhabitants to depart in any detail from the ritual prescribed by Manu, that legendary old man whom they make responsible for their instinct of segregation, attributing to him the narrow and prohibitive restrictions that have bound them up in close corporations since Vedic times.

The houses of the astrologers, on the other hand, are part of the place. There is a whole street of them, the walls polished and clean, rising from a high plinth and covered with pictures and designs which might be the signs of the zodiac, but are not. The passage opens into a wide courtyard at the back of which stands a substantial house barely discernible from the road through the narrow lintel, for in this land, either through respect to the Raja who alone might possess a substantial roof, or by his command, or out of fear of making any display of property, the rule has held through many centuries that

the buildings abutting on the street should be thatched. Perhaps a few generations ago, before we crippled the oppressor, the doors in many of the houses were so contrived that the interior buildings could not be seen. The astrologers indeed may have been exempt from the rule, for they were and are still, though insidiously, the most influential men in the place, and the Raja in his uncomfortable English palace is guided by their oracles, which are of course incapable of any new or subversive utterance.

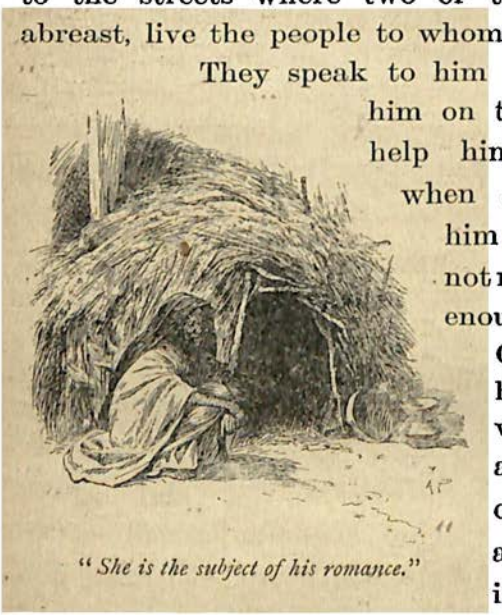
The autocrat himself, if he is like other Rajas of the district, belongs to the most prescribed and fettered class in Hindustan. He can have few, if any, friends, and intimacy even with his relatives is impossible in strictly orthodox families, for palace etiquette founded on suspicion forbids any free intercourse between father and son, and brother and brother. It is often impossible for neighbours of similar rank and caste to meet, since each family has its own ideas about its relative dignity and importance, and the traditions of no two families correspond. "A" may not take more than six steps forward from the *gadi* to meet "B," and the pride of

"B's" ancestors, respected by the family from a date before Asoka, make it impossible for him to proceed more than three steps beyond the threshold to meet "A." Consequently there is an irreducible space between.

There are many such spaces, and they give a kind of cellular tissue to the community which no doubt preserves its existence. The provision implies in the framers of the mechanism an obscure and penetrating wisdom which in its fixity seems to operate as surely and instinctively as the immanent and plastic spirit which informs nature. The cell that by evading the law ceases to pursue its function is destroyed as far as the social fabric is concerned, which to the Hindu is life. Therefore the fabric is indestructible. Whether it is worth preserving on the terms prescribed by Manu is another thing.

At Parlakimedi there is one man who has decided that it is not. In a little round hut of wattle and grass, shaped like a dove-house, propped against a galvanised iron telegraph pole, and offering little protection from the sun and rain, lives an outcast of the fisher caste who gave up his birthright more than forty years ago for a Pariah woman, and ever

since has lived apart from his kin. Near by in more substantial houses, thatched, but floored with *chuṇam* and exposing narrow verandahs to the streets where two or three may lie abreast, live the people to whom he belonged. They speak to him if they meet him on the road, and help him sometimes when ague catches him and he cannot make nets fast enough to live. Outside his hut squats a woman, short and angular, of indefinite age. Her hair is still black, and hangs in clots like pictures of Medusa in the school-books,—it is easier to search so. Her eyes are like a wounded worm. Her skin is wrinkled into weals, and her mouth and nose hazily intermingled as in the snout of an animal. She is the subject of his romance. Over the pair the telegraph wires stretch, and messages fly between stout brokers



"She is the subject of his romance."

quoting stocks and dividends, and the man and the woman are nearer in spirit to these practical folk than is any one else in the place. For in spite of the Palace and its billiard-table, and the College with its English text-books, its affiliation to the Madras University, and its Professor, the antiquary with his ear-trumpet and voluminous European correspondence, they are the most English-minded people in Parlakimedi, because they once dared to take a risk and meet a responsibility.

I remember a smell as of cowslips oozing up from the scum of the jhils at each end of the town. The fisherman used to sit on the ghat steps and bake his old bones in the sun. The thought of him always brings to my mind the fragrance of cowslips in the clay meadows of High Suffolk, just as the patches of sunshine glimmering on the dim purple background of the mountains behind the jhil, when a shaft of light broke through a cloud, used to recall the golden harvest fields by the Suffolk coast.

It was the jhils that made the place a paradise. A mile to the north and south of the town were great expanses of water covered with pink and purple lotus flowers, haunted by innumerable wild-fowl, and encompassed by

wide stretches of swampy ground that held the snipe all through the season. In the background rose gaunt and splintered hills, a chaos of rose-coloured loam and rock that bevelled off into the lemon-green of the plain. Behind them towered the thickly-forested ranges of the Eastern Ghats; that extend far west into the Central Provinces, and whose highest peaks, Deva Giri (4960 feet) and Mahendra Giri (5130 feet) overlook Parlakimedi to the north and south. The distinctive charm of the country lies in the blending and compromise of opposites — in the promontory of smooth rock jutting into the rice fields, the swampy inlet of marsh penetrating into the bed-rock of the hills, the harmony of red, grey, and green, barren and fertile, "the desert and the sown," the metallic glitter and soft tropical sheen, each standing as the happy relief and complement of the other in a perpetual eirenicon of sunshine, whatever their old cosmic differences may have been.

There were other jhils beyond the hills, and the shooting belonged to whoever liked to take it. I had it all to myself for two seasons. The birds used to lie in the tufted grass beside the water and far out in the surrounding

paddy fields, but became thinner as one went farther from the jhil. It took a good half-day for a single gun to go over one of these snipe-grounds, and with ordinary good sport a hundred cartridges would be fired off before noon. When birds were thick, if one cared to go over the ground twice, it was easy to double one's bag. Or there was the alternative of putting out on the jhil for duck. With much calling and halloaing I used to gather in a few of the picturesque fishermen who plied their canoes all day among the lotus flowers, setting their wicker traps and leaning over their prows intent on spearing rohu, alert as kingfishers. Two of their dug-outs were roped together, and one sat on a connecting thwart with a leg in each. After a few shots other fishermen would come in from distant parts of the jhil and help to beat up the duck or retrieve the wounded. They had a genius for spearing birds as they dived into the weeds and came up for a second to breathe. Shooting alone one had to work hard for six brace, for, thick as the duck were, there were no islands on the jhil, and no cover to speak of. For a moment or two when they were cornered and turned back overhead one needed a second

gun. Then one might wait long for another shot. Still every day brought its peculiar chances, and one was held on the jhil by a subtle fascination till sunset, when all the lotus flowers, pink, white, and purple, took on the same torchlight glow.

At Christmas time and on the happy occasions when a dozen guns could be collected, there were days to remember.

The two jhils to the north and south of the town were called poetically the "Rama Sagram" and "Sita Sagram," "Sagram" being a high-flown Sanskrit word for "sea." I was admitted into the pleasaunce of the Rama Sagram one March at the end of the wild-fowl season when nearly all self-respecting duck were in Central Asia or Tibet. A few common teal were left, and of course the despised whistler,[1] and myriads of cotton teal,[2] which give one good shooting when there is nothing else. The day's bag, humble in quality, gave my friend occasion to refer to Hume and Marshall,[3] and I was introduced to those rare

[1] Dendrocygna Javanica, the smaller whistling teal.

[2] Nettopus Coromandelianus.

[3] 'Game Birds of India, Burma, and Ceylon.' The book is now out of print.

volumes for the first time and read about the thirty-six species of duck and geese which visit India in the cold weather. The illustrations were soon familiar, and also the details of the plumage, feet, and web; the colour and length of the bill; and above all, the distribution of the species. But there were eight and a half months before the wild-fowl themselves would come. No schoolboy ever looked forward to an event with such impatience, and no volume could ever have been more essential to a book-worm's peace of mind than Volume III. of Hume and Marshall was to mine.

In the hot weather I went to the coast where some desultory wild-fowling helped to keep me in patience. We left Parlakimedi at midnight, and driving four stages in the dark reached the sea. At Parlakimedi the air was stifling; there was not the faintest breeze. With *Khuskus* and verandah tatties, and Palghat mats to sleep on, and punkahs going day and night, the bungalow was habitable no more. But in four hours a fresh breeze was playing on us, and a tussore silk suit was not enough to keep one warm. Until the rains fall this coast wind blows continuously, and makes the seaside almost as refreshing as the hills,

though only a few miles inland the same wind, beating over a surface of sun-baked rock and sand, becomes as hot as a furnace blast.

The great tracts of marsh and lake that lie just within the sand-dunes exposed to these winds and the full orchestra of the surf are called in local speech the "*tamparahs*." Thither I used to ride at four in the morning on a pony which saw many things that were hidden to me and caused great alarm to the women of the fishing villages, who threw themselves screaming into the prickly-pear hedges, deaf to all assurances of goodwill. It was certainly a ghostly hour and place, and when I arrived at the *tamparah*, with the sun thousands of herons and multitudinous aquatic birds rose uneasily, clouding the air and filling me with surmises of more precious fowl that lay hid. The fishermen befriended me. With the first light they began to throw nets, spear rohu, and haul in the traps set overnight. Their dug-outs would constantly disturb the cotton teal that flew backwards and forwards from end to end of the lake. I could not get near them in a boat, but by wading out into a narrow channel and half concealing myself behind a reed screen, placed there to guide

the fish into the nets, I got good sport. I shot there several mornings, and every day the birds became wilder and warier, and flashed over the screen at a furious rate as if they were running the gauntlet and seemed rather to enjoy the fun.

Sometimes one or two larger fowl would beat round bewildered and suspicious, and a wedge, after approaching and wheeling back many times, would pass over the reed screen. These were the spotbill, the only duck proper that have two minds about leaving India for the hot weather. I blessed them for this indecision and the vivid colour they lent to the bag.

There was little other variety in it. The common whistler, a rank and unsavoury bird, fell sometimes as a concession to an early-risen sais, and twice the larger whistling teal[1] added another species. The latter, a rare bird, shy and difficult of approach, was only to be won by strategy. When I found he was not to be approached in a dug-out, covered never so warily with green reeds and propelled almost imperceptibly from behind, I had to manœuvre to catch him flighting. I had

[1] Dendrocygna fulva.

noticed that at sunset they flew north, as I believed, to the Chilka Lake, and as they returned in the early morning they would pass within gunshot over a narrow straggling swamp, where there was an island with some bushes and tufts of reeds. Here I found cover, and shot two or three as they flew over. *Fulva* was the only rare variety I shot by the coast, but for mere shooting there was always the cotton teal, a strong, hardy, little bird, fast and dodgy on the wing, not bad eating, and in season any time from October to the rains. Whatever else failed, thanks to him I always used to ride home with a fair bag, and the conviction that cotton teal driven overhead in a high wind from all sides and at all angles and elevations give one as good shooting as one could wish.

But this coast shooting was merely an impatient parenthesis. It was not the real thing. The resident birds which haunt Ganjam, with the exception of a casual spotbill, are coarse fowl, and one does not waste shot on them in the cold weather. The migrants are the aristocrats. The North is their home, and they descend on India like the old Moslem invaders and make off again when they have had their

fill of the Aryan preserves, seasoned for the real business of life. In discipline, energy, and singleness of purpose they are like the Norsemen, and as different from the indigenous fowl as the English bluejacket from the *bunniah* in the bazaar. They fly in extended squadrons with an immutable purpose straight for the South, and when they return to their old haunts you may hear them winging over the bungalow with a noise like tearing calico. In a few hours, perhaps a day or two,—no one knows their haunts or the duration of their flight,—they will be skirmishing on the waters of the high Tibetan tableland, or on

"Some frore Caspian reed bed,"

where the ice still glistens among the brown rushes by the shore. No wonder these birds are welcomed by the wild-fowler, heralding as they do the cold weather with their message from the North. These, perhaps, have flown over Lhasa and the holy gompas of Tibet; these east from Yamdok Cho; those west from Mansarowar. Who knows that the clumsy shoveller wobbling in the village tank was not a week ago breasting the waves of Issik Kul. For my own part I never saw a flight of

duck but I fell under the spell, and vowed a pilgrimage to the holy and enchanted land whence they came.

I returned to Parlakimedi with the rains at the end of June, and there were still four and a half months before the migratory duck came in. There was no big-game shooting in the district to speak of. Sometimes one heard of a poaching leopard, but I never cared to sit up all night in a *machan* over a kill. Bears were scarce, and I only once had an encounter with them. One hot August day I came to hear of a family who had taken a cave at Rayagudda in the mountains twenty miles away. I was told that they had come from Gooma for the season, and you could hear them grunting and playing in their chambers in the honeycombed rock.

After a ride of twenty miles in the blistering sun across broken paddy fields and rough cart tracks, a scramble on hands and knees up a steep hillside and a long vigil beside a cave, one is apt to feel a little bit drowsy. I lay on a slab of stone and peered through arching trees on to the plain, chequered in the soft moonlight with the shadows of the mango trees and the dark patches of sugar-cane. I

fell asleep in the great peacefulness of the forest, or rather I was just enough awake to be roused by any unaccustomed sound or stirring by my side. Screech-owl, night-jar, droning beetle, bats fluttering about the caves, faintly punctuated my dreams. Then sounds were borne across the valley from a distant village. I heard the creaking of a crazy old sugar-cane mill turned by buffaloes, the inevitable tom-tom, the high-pitched voice of a scolding woman, and somehow I became conscious of a sense of brotherhood with the bears. I contrasted them with their human neighbours. I wondered what they must think of the dirty packed villages and the unsightly creatures that lived in them, their rude gesticulations when encountered in the forest, precipitate flight,—arms waving, legs wriggling, adhesive to tree-trunks with an awkward mimicry of apes. I thought of the smooth, even life of the bear descending at nightfall into the valley to drink at the stream; stretching himself in the cool of the moon; seeking his food according to the season, whether it be the ripe blue plum, rich murwa berries, green mango fruit, crops of the village, or honey of wild bees; quietly

dismantling the white ants' castle to lick up the inmates with his tongue; or when delicacies are scarce, not too much of an epicure to spend a night dislodging boulders for the casual insect underneath; then in the grey before dawn returning to his cave, grave and deliberate in gait, secure from petty passions, little cares and anxieties, and humiliations, higgling and haggling with puckered brows and nerves atwitch.

The scolding voice from the valley broke in on my reverie and brought me back to my slab of stone. Could the woman have a soul, I wondered, and if so, how much more so the bears? Then I remembered why I was there.

It must have been about half-past four when my shikari touched me. I could distinguish the faint sound of stones being dislodged at the bottom of the hill. It seemed a good half-hour before a form grew out of the morning twilight, and I saw a full-grown bear sauntering up the ravine towards me and his den. I thought he must pass within ten yards of my gun, but he turned off behind a rock which concealed another entrance to the cave. Hearing a second one moving below, I crept as softly as possible from my rock to get a nearer

shot. I had not crawled a dozen yards when the bear came into sight. It was the mother attended by two cubs. She was a little slimmer than the first, and had a little more of the air of having stayed out too late, as she kept looking back in a maternal, shepherding way at her offspring, who trotted confidently behind. I knelt down and aimed, though I knew that I was an accursed, murderous villain. Bhaloo reared up, showing a corner of white waistcoat, and fled precipitously down the hill. I fired the other barrel after her unavailingly as she sped through the loose stones and tree-trunks. It was a bad light for the distance, but I like to think that I aimed carelessly on purpose, for to this day I do not know whether I should have ridden home happier with my sister's skin or without it.

Soon after this murderous disturbance all the cicadas on the hillside broke out into a glorious pæan of praise. A peacock mee-ow'd like a prisoned cat. A crow-pheasant bubbled musically with a sound like water falling in the pleasure-dome of Xanadu from the bath of one of Kubla Khan's princesses. I must have been glad, or I would not remember these things.

"The generous and honest nature of the beast disturbs the cordiality of the sport." I quote from some forgotten moralisings of De Quincey.

Happily I felt no blood-guiltiness in the sacrifice of fowls. In October, and even in the last half of September, I haunted the jhils with a keen eye on the horizon, and illusive hopes built on the records of early migrants noted in 'The Game Birds of India.' I knew nothing of the district, and could only learn that duck were plentiful,—what duck, nobody knew. Out of the sky somewhere, tumbling among the brown reeds or the lotus flowers, would fall the substantial replicas of those plates I knew so well, and I would not need the plates to identify them. It was a late season. In the first week of November I saw a flock of teal. Ten days later one of the first wedge of invaders that passed overhead struck the water like a missile. It was a female tufted pochard. The next day an army of birds arrived, and the season had begun.

It was not difficult to get together a few guns in the cold weather and shoot the jhils systematically. And what weather it was!

We started in a nipping air through country white with dew and gossamer. In a little while the pearly mist dissolved and revealed the range of hills through which one was to penetrate somehow to reach the jhil. There was never any doubt about the day,—no rain or sleet or shivering outside a covert with fingers too numbed to feel the trigger,—but always a flawless arc of sky and a genial sun. At the best of seasons the only uncertainty was in the nature of the sport. Nothing had been prepared, not a head had been reared. All one could count on was a good number of birds. No one knew where they came from or what their next caravanserai might be, and what tactics they might pursue baffled conjecture.

After the first report of a gun the surface of the jhil quivered and the air crackled with a sound that can only be described as "hurtling." It was like shredding different kinds of cloth, or the reverberation of distant cannon in a pent-up valley. The ear of the old wild-fowler is tuned to that music, and he can often distinguish the flight of different species in the dark; but this was an orchestra to puzzle him. Generally the pin-

tail were the first to go. They would rise up high out of range, and after wheeling once or twice to make a strategic reconnaissance, leave the field to the enemy. The gadwall, spotbill, and wigeon would sweep the jhil and settle several times before making off. The pochards were the laggards, especially the red-crest, the heaviest and handsomest of the Indian duck. The females would often make off in a body and leave the drakes behind. No bird is so easily marked at a distance. The coal-black against the white of the body and the beautiful chestnut neck are distinguishable at a hundred and twenty yards, and at fifty one could see the yellow-buff on the crest. The red-crested pochard generally made up the bulk of the bag, with a sprinkling of spotbill and gadwall and common teal; the garganey, the common pochard, and the tufted pochard were less numerous. There were often a shoveller or two, and perhaps a ruddy shell-drake or a comb duck. The pintail were too elusive, but paid for it in flighting. The mallard and white-eye did not come so far south. But there was always the chance of a casual visitor; that was half the charm of the

sport. I expected the pink-head (caryophyllacea) and the scaup. One day, I felt sure, I would come across their haunts,—some lonely swamp by the coast separated from the breakers by a belt of white dunes, or some natural basin in the hills a mile or two inland, where the crack of a gun is rarely heard. Then amongst a heap of pochard and spotbill and other common fowl there would be a rose-pink neck with a black bar at the throat, or a dull green crest and black body and black-and-white wings, the last a dowdy bird, but one that would make up for days of vain hopes and disappointment.

At noon every whole or sane bird had flown, the boats gathered for lunch, and we counted the spoil. Afterwards some of us put out again to collect the wounded, while others skirted round the jhil for snipe. Retrieving the pochard was a sport in itself; the "tufters" rose for the fraction of a second only and needed a quick eye and concentrated shot.

Such was a typical day's small-game shooting in Ganjam, which is far from being the best district for wild-fowling in India. I have often wondered why estate-owners, who find pheasant-rearing too expensive, do not let

their shooting and spend the cold weather in the East. Not at Parlakimedi, if they are going to make a business of it, for there is too little cover there and the jhils are too far apart. For a record bag one should go to Sind or the jhils by the Ganges in Bengal, or for snipe to Upper Burma. For my own part, I could not be happier anywhere with a gun than at Parlakimedi. It was the very desultoriness of the sport that fascinated me. For duck the more guns and the more drilling the better, but snipe-shooting is the ideal sport for the solitary man who is happy enough to be in the open air, immune from all obligations save those of sport, which mean the observation of certain decencies and instinctive traditions in one's behaviour to the wild creatures. It is a kind of shooting that borrows a great deal of its attraction from locality. Discipline spoils it. The conditions are least congenial, I think, when there is a line of guns drawn up in a vista of dull, interminable, flat, featureless, paddy fields, where one is tied to one's own furrow all day, with nothing to distinguish the ground that has been shot over from the ground where one is to shoot, and apparently no reason why the birds should lie in one

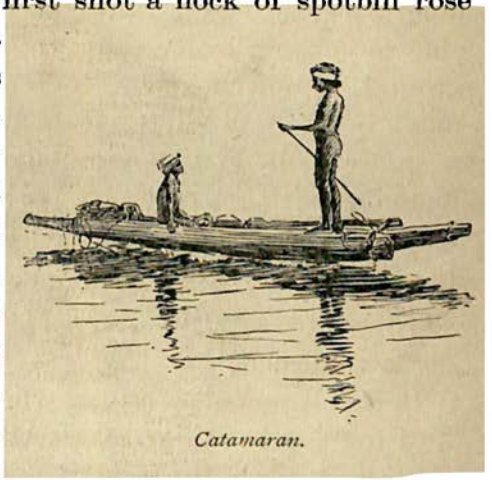
field more than another. But in recalling the happiest conditions my mind runs to that amphitheatre in the hills, the purple mountains all round, the marsh encroaching on the lake, and the initiative with oneself whether to potter deviously and explore or to work methodically over old ground. It is difficult to say wherein lies the greater charm—in remembering where birds have lain before, and in putting them up, as one generally does, in the same place, or in indulging one's instinct for locality which is so seldom amiss after a season, and which can hazard to a nicety the conditions of bent, grass, and mud the captious snipe prefers.

There was a kind of weed to be found in the discoloured ooze of the reed-beds by the Sita Sagram, particularly where they were seamed with a rusty iron deposit borne upwards by an underground spring. Here one used to flush a wisp of snipe every few yards. I think the first time I realised the honest and legitimate advantage of sensation over all theories and gropings of the mind was one morning when I had discovered this rusty ooze and benefited by it. I understood that one must feel life before one can conceive its

meaning, and almost simultaneously with the discovery, perhaps a little before it, came a blind felicity of hand and eye by which I was able to convert every snipe that rose from the ground into a heap of inert feathers. The most indifferent shot has his day. I sat on a sunny bank and thought about it. I was a hedonist with a great pity for those who were not. It was early in the day, I had my record bag, and a horse to carry me to another jhil. Needless to say the physical inspiration has never returned.

It was a melancholy day when I put up my gun for the last time at Parlakimedi. It was the third week in March, and the last companies of wild-fowl were thinking of going away. Before they came back I would be in a busy, civilised place, where one never saw a live duck unless it were inside a wire netting, or a snipe which was not draped in water-cress and stuck on a piece of toast under an alias. I had been shooting all the morning by the Rama Sagram where the snipe had gathered for migration. You could put them up everywhere—in the jhil itself among reeds growing in three feet of water, in the green, dew-fed, horse gram, in the dry grass of the bunds where the paddy fields were baked as hard

as macadam; even among the ashes of a burnt reed-bed. A few duck were left on the jhil, and after the first shot a flock of spotbill rose up and separated into twos and threes. They were unsettled with the heat, and off their guard, and a wedge came circling within range. One fine old drake with a gorgeous wing-bar fell at my feet. It was the last gift of Parlakimedi, save these happy memories which are perennial.



Catamaran.

THE MORNING SONG OF THE CICADAS.

The purple plains are spread below;
The sun has kissed the clouds away;
The gossamer is all aglow;
Lift we our voice in praise to-day.

Join, join, the jungle wakes;
Now praise we God, the Wakener.
He made the forest for our sakes,
The giant oak, the gossamer.

Our home is in the dewy leaves;
We are the choristers of God—
The web of music that he weaves,
The voice that woke the sleeping sod.

We lift our voice in gladness now,
We sing the mystery of birth;
Quicken the sap within the bough,
And thrill God's secret through the earth.

The busy brook's perpetual praise,
The morning songster's loud acclaim,
Join with the anthem that we raise
To celebrate the Maker's name.

The purple plains are spread below;
The sun has kissed the clouds away;
The gossamer is all aglow;
Lift we our voice in praise to-day.

ANOTHER WAY HOME.

I.

I SAT in the warm sand of Karachi among the tamarisks with my eyes turned West. My work in India was finished; I was not restricted by leave, and I might go home any way I chose. I felt London's magnet, but Persia and Arabia intervened. Between me and home lay innumerable incentives to wander—Shiraz and the rose-garden of Hafiz, and Persepolis with the Dashtiarzan valley thirty-five miles to the west, where one may meet with strange shikar; old-world Tadmor buried in the desert; Mosul and the upper Tigris valley; Baghdad with its mosques and fables; Hitt and Hilleh and the ruins of Babylon; Ispahan and the Khorud pass to Kum and Teheran; the flowery Karun valley where Nearchus, Alexander's captain,

passed to meet his general; forsaken Susa, the Shushan of the Bible; the Kermanshah road to Teheran from Baghdad; the old route by Tabriz and Erzeroum through Armenia to Trebizond, crossing the path of Xenophon; or, nearer to hand, the Nuskhi route from Quetta. No wonder that with all these visions in my head I had not settled on a road, and left Karachi without any definite plan. The happy traveller is always an opportunist, and the greater his indifference, as a rule, the more servile is opportunity. At Karachi chance served me with a medium of transport sympathetically casual.

Her Majesty's Telegraph Ship, *Patrick Stuart*, was starting on a cruise up the Persian Gulf to test the cables, and her captain offered me his hospitality for the voyage. On account of quarantine restrictions the vessel had to be six days out of port before she could touch anywhere. So we killed time happily, first at Astola, a desert island off the coast of Baluchistan, then off Bushire. Here I was tempted to strike the trade route to Shiraz and Teheran, but there was every chance of the passes

being blocked. So I turned my back on Bushire a little regretfully, and in two days elected to be put ashore on the Shat-el-Arab. I was deposited by the ship's boat on the Persian bank at a point opposite Fao, the most southerly station in Turkish Arabia. I could not speak the language of either shore, but a member of the crew acted as my interpreter and engaged an Arab to forward me with the rest of my baggage up the Shat-el-Arab to the British Consulate at Mohammerah. We waited twelve hours for the tide, all which time I had to lurk at the bottom of the *bellam*, lest I should be discovered and arrested by the quarantine officers on the opposite bank. At night we lost the tide, as my boatmen anchored after dark under pain of being fired on as pirates by Sheikh Khazal's river police. So it took us forty-eight hours to make way against wind and tide to Mohommerah. The nights were chilly, and I had no food save dates and *Khobes*, a kind of coarse brown bread, the staple *fellaheen* diet, so that I was led to regard the Sheikh with more annoyance for prolonging the term of my discomfort than gratitude for affording me his protection.

Arrived at the Consulate, a week passed very pleasantly. The climate of the Shat-el-Arab is fresh and invigorating, like that of southern Italy in February, an air to make life worth living if only for the sake of breathing it. The verandah of the house overlooks the Karun river at its junction with the Shat-el-Arab. The mulberry trees and willows that lined the creek outside were putting on their autumn yellow. Beyond were the date-palms laid out with the mathematical precision of the gardens of Cyrus. All paths led through the palm groves to the desert, an illimitable stretch of yellow baked clay, broken here and there by a clump of palm-trees or a domed Arab's tomb. The mud walls of Mohammerah lay crumbling and unrepaired a good half mile beyond the palm limit, waiting the days, perhaps not far distant, when the port will fill the barren reproach between.

To continue my journey boatmen were not to be had at any price. If I had ventured in a *bellam* my men would have been forced to land and lodge ten days in the lazaretto. So I had to wait for the British India steam packet, and all my skulkings on the Shat-

el-Arab were of no avail. The S.S. *Malda* steaming slowly up-stream made the voyage to Basra in a little over two hours. She only made a five days' stay there, and on her departure we were transmitted to the lazaretto, a dismal whitewashed edifice, situated in a courtyard by the river-side, a foot deep in mud, and guarded by a wooden palisade. In this filthy hovel, unsanitary enough to propagate every disease under the sun, there were incarcerated with me the French consul of Bushire and his wife, an American traveller, and two Levantine tobacco merchants, all with a clean bill of health. Four of us were packed into one small room innocent of all furniture save a primitive wooden bedstead.

Our only diversion in the lazaretto was to walk on the roof, where we cursed the Osmanli roundly for an obstinate, obdurate, and entirely objectionable fellow. Later, in the interior, being entertained in Turkish homes with a kindness and hospitality which have no equal in Europe, we had reason to be ashamed of our ill-considered abuse. The social Turk was a revelation. Most English travellers who touch at the ports of the Ottoman empire only meet the Osmanli in

his official capacity, and in consequence he has for many years been in danger of being hanged for his bad name.

At last our term of imprisonment came to an end, and on the evening of the same day, December 21, I and a friend of the lazaretto caught the paddle steamer *Medjidieh*, for Baghdad, and arrived in the city of Haroun al Raschid on the morning of Christmas day.

In Baghdad we were received in a little shanty which was dignified by the name of Hotel d'Europe, and was kept by an Armenian. My bedroom opened into a verandah that overlooked the Tigris. Here society was most cosmopolitan. We sat down to table with a Greek, a Turk, an Armenian, a Jew, a Levantine, a Bombay Eurasian, and an Italian half-caste whose father had been an explorer in Abyssinia and whose mother was a native of that country. He told me that he had been taught French by General Gordon at Khartoum. All were merchants trading in liquorice or wool. I was on good terms with them all save the Abyssinian, who, when returning from orgies in the early hours of the morning, would be escorted by his host's band, and made a point of drawing up outside my

window to play a travesty of "God save the Queen."

The bazaars of the city were an unfailing delight, and I soon became accustomed to being lost, and learnt to find my bearings by following the mangy ragged little mules with their empty water-skins down to the river-side. The high-roofed thoroughfares precluded the view of mosque and minaret, the customary way-marks. The winding alleys that threaded the maze were so narrow that the quaint gabled windows seemed to jostle each other to shut out the light. It was not often that the sun crept into the narrow space between to guide us. So we came to follow the muleteers. With this compass to fall back upon we proceeded to lose ourselves in the labyrinth of the bazaars, only taking care to avoid the Jewish quarter, where the smallpox epidemic was raging at its worst. It was all strange, yet I seemed to breathe a familiar air. Central Asia, India, the Far East have their own fascination, but they are not the orient that entered into our pores in childhood through the Bible, The Talisman, The Book of Hours, the stained-glass windows in the parish church, and the web of romance we used to weave out

of tales of Arabs and Saracens and Islamic chivalry. Old pictures that had become assimilated in a general blurred impression took fresh outlines and recurred at every step. The grave Sheikhs, with the *aagal* wound round their turbans, the Jezebel windows in the suburbs, the camel-drivers in the narrow alleys crying, "*Ba-lak, Ba-lak*," the *gufas* on the Tigris that looked like floating cauldrons,—these are the associations that invest the place with its air of hoary antiquity more than the ruins of Babylon and the legends of Haroun Al Raschid.

The *gufas* are made of ribs of willow, pomegranate, and date-palm, covered with skins and plastered over with pitch. They were described by Herodotus over two thousand years ago. He watched them floating down the stream from Armenia, round "like a buckler," and freighted with casks of palm-wine. Every vessel had a live ass on board, for when they had sold their merchandise in Babylon they auctioned the ribs of the boat and carried the skins back to Armenia on their donkeys; then they made new craft and repeated the journey. When I saw these vessels steered by two men standing upright exactly as Herodotus described them, I felt that this much-maligned old chron-

icler sometimes deviated into veracity, though he had too much respect for the truth to speak it promiscuously.

Five days of our fortnight in Baghdad and its neighbourhood we spent on a visit to Hilleh, the ruins of Babylon, and Birs Nimrud. Archæologists are still excavating at Babylon, and out of the loose rubble they dig up they contrive to unravel the secrets of the past, but there is nothing in the *débris* such as one sees at Pompeii to catch the eye of the uninitiated and help him to reconstruct old times. From Hilleh we visited Birs Nimrud, a ruined tower on a great mound of *débris*. It is the eight-storied shrine of Belus which Herodotus described, and tradition says that it is built on the site of Babel. It was somewhere about here that we met a caravan of pilgrims from Persia carrying their dead to the shrine of the martyred Ali at Kerbela. The corpses were embalmed and packed in crates strung on the back of asses. The women of the party rode on panniers, one on each side of a mule.

I must not dwell too much on detailed impressions or I will swell out this brief abstract of a journey to an inordinate length, yet I should like to pay a tribute to the kindness

of the Turks who entertained us on the way. Thanks to my friend's introductions, we had the good fortune to enjoy the hospitality of more than one Turkish and Armenian notable —I am still haunted by that word, a drago-mannerism of the worst type. There was Kerope Keroumdjan Effendi of Baghdad, who insisted on our making the journey in his own coach, drawn by his four tireless, high-stepping mules, who had carpets laid for us in the caravanserais by the way, and sheep slain for our servants on the road, and who came out himself to meet us on our return. There was Mahmoud Pasha of Hilleh, who, on account of an introduction from Kerope Effendi, made his whole house our own, saddled us his best thoroughbred Arabs, and escorted us wherever we rode with a guard of his own men. When I think of the unselfish kindness of these men, their courteous welcome, and whole-hearted hospitality to the infidel stranger, I am ashamed of every abusive word I have ever spoken of the Turk, and all the ignorant mis-representations we hear of him at home. And hereby hangs a confession that may make my mind less uneasy in looking back on the days I spent between the rivers.

In bidding farewell to my host, Mahmoud Pasha, conversation turned on the coming Paris Exhibition, which he had intended visiting. "Would I be there?" he asked. I said it was doubtful; but I hoped that if he went to Paris, he would extend his journey to London, and having gone so far, he might go a little farther and pay me a visit at ——, quite in the country, peaceful and retired enough, but an exceedingly pretty neighbourhood, where he might see a little of English rustic life. It would give me great pleasure to think that I might see him some day at ——, and when he smilingly admitted that his tastes were too domestic to carry him so far afield, and that his project of going to the Paris Exhibition was a little chimerical, I could only express my profound regret. My American friend was more honest with his blunt, "Then I guess you'll never circulate round to the States, so it's no good expecting you down Brooklyn way." As I rode away on my host's horse, I felt deeply ashamed of my insincerity, the more so as it contrasted so unfavourably with the Pasha's liberal and unselfish entertainment. I pictured to myself his unexpected arrival at ——, and a certain grey-haired

wrathful old gentleman, who has a claim to be consulted in such questions as the invitation of guests, and who, I feel sure, would not have run across the threshold to meet the Pasha had he appeared in the drive, or pressed him to make a long stay, waving aside all polite deprecatory hesitation with the repeated assertion that it was the Pasha's house and not his own.

The following summer at —— my conscience was often uneasy; and well it might be, for I had extended similar invitations to other Orientals of various colours, castes, and creeds. Often as I looked through the drawing-room windows I used to think I saw a red fez or a purple turban coming down the drive. The habit was inexcusable perhaps, but these invitations, offered more for the sake of something to say than anything else, were as sincere as most men's compliments, and prompted by genuine goodwill.

I did go to the Paris Exhibition after all, and I looked for my Turkish Pasha. It is a small sop to my conscience to think that nothing would have pleased me better than to have clapped him on the back, stood him a jolly good dinner at a restaurant, and taken

him to a ballet sufficiently indecorous to have impressed the occasion on his mind for years afterwards in the retirement of his Mesopotamian home.

II.

On January 5 I left for Damascus. There are three ways home from Baghdad. Firstly, the customary caravan route by the Euphrates Valley to Deir el Zor, and over the desert to Tadmor, the ancient Palmyra, whence to Damascus. In making this journey, which takes on an average twenty-four days in summer and sometimes as many as thirty in winter, it is better and cheaper to join one of the caravans that leave Baghdad every week. There are wells between Deir and Damascus which are never dry throughout the year. A second and equally interesting though roundabout route is by Kermanshah to Teheran, but in mid-winter it is barely practicable. The third way is to strike straight across the desert to some point in Syria, Damascus for choice; but as this tract is almost waterless, one must ride all day and most of the night so as to get through before one's camel is

exhausted. When I arrived at Baghdad I had almost decided to take the caravan route by the Euphrates valley; but in the end the open illimitable desert drew me with a fascination I could not resist, and I made up my mind to ride across the Palmyran desert with the post to Damascus. I started upon this adventure with some misgivings.

The post makes the journey to Damascus in ten days; so in winter one gains twenty days by going with it instead of by caravan. Yet there is no speed about it. The bags are entrusted to one old man, a venerable Arab Haji, who does not hurry himself in the least, until he reaches the Euphrates, but loiters with his friends, the herdsmen and shepherds, drinking coffee from his beaked Turkish pot, passing round his painted wooden pipe, and retailing the gossip of all the quidnuncs of the Baghdad bazaars. From Hitt it is necessary to make forced marches over the waterless desert; but when the first village is reached at the foot of Lebanon he is as dilatory as ever. The post is the last thing he worries about. The Bedouin leave the old man alone, as the Turkish Government subsidises the Sheikhs to let the post through.

Beyond this they have no control over the tribes of the desert of Tadmor; so it was useless for me to apply for a pass. Had they got wind of my plan they would have stopped me at the outset. It was seven years since a white man had gone with the post.

To Haji Moussa, then—for such is the name of the splendid old man with the prophet's face and voice of a deep-toned bell—I entrusted myself confidently and all my goods. Of my journey with him over the Palmyra Desert I have written elsewhere, and I will not repeat the story. It tells of arrest and robbery by the Bedouin; a silent, deep-browed Arab and a crest-fallen vagabond trudging disconsolately over the desert back towards Baghdad; a second meeting and parley with the Bedouin, in which the old man persuaded them that the vagabond had neither silver nor gold to pay their toll, and a moment of ominous suspense while the Sheikh and his followers deliberated on our fate. Happily European evening dress, wardrobe and toilet paraphernalia, offered few attractions. They were examined and passed over with the courtesy one might expect from a Marseilles custom-house officer. The camel was restored,

and we were allowed to continue on our way to the Arab paradise of Scham. What my fate might have been had I been more expensively equipped, I have often wondered. In hard cash I had only two pieces of gold, for I had changed my money in Baghdad for a letter of credit on the Ottoman Bank in Damascus. The Bedouin had tried to force my hand, and found that I held no cards. It was owing to Moussa's tact and my own lack of accessories that I reached my journey's end.

After this adventure we were by no means quit of the Bedouin, and Moussa had to employ the greatest strategy to avoid their encampments. On the fourth day from the Euphrates we drove on our spent camels at their fastest trot. Moussa curtailed to its briefest limit the short halt he allowed for the morning meal. All day he scanned the horizon anxiously, and many were the objects that broke the sky-line — tufts of tamarisk bush and artemisia, sandhills, large stones, and cairns that marked some deserted Bedouin encampment: all these imagination construed into the advancing camels of the Bedouin. They seemed actually to move, and took the shape of our friends of yesterday, swinging

down on us for all the world like huge, black, dissipated compasses. At noon we entered broken country—low hills to left and right, rocky gorges through which we rode with eyes strained expectantly for the earliest revelation of what lay behind yonder jutting rock, or what beyond that rise now but a furlong in front of us. Everywhere there were signs of recent encampments. We had to thrash on our poor tired beasts mercilessly, and their cries and groans and bubbling protests were piteous to hear; the cruelty of it was to me the hardest part of the journey, not to speak of the physical fatigue of beating my wretched animal almost continuously for eighteen hours out of the twenty-four, an incident of the voyage on which I had not counted.

An hour before sunset we reached a natural well,—the desert is not quite waterless in January,—an ideal camping-place, in a little concealed hollow. There were a few dried tamarisk bushes near by for firewood, and as it was the hour for the evening meal, I began to make myself comfortable for a short rest before the night's journey. But Moussa only stayed a few minutes to water

the camels, and then pressed on more hotly than ever. We had ridden some three miles when we reached a low sandhill that lay right across our path. Here Moussa halted, and began hurriedly to collect some sprigs of firewood. In a few minutes the rice was prepared, and the coffee bubbling in the pot. The old man carefully stamped out every spark and ember; then the sun fell and it was dark. Moussa was more than usually devout over his prayers that night; his prostrations were more numerous and more impressive than ever, from which I gathered that we were in a dangerous country, for I had come to regard the old man's devotions as a kind of kindunometer, if I may coin the word, the frequency or laxity of which betrayed to a nicety the exact degree of danger in which we stood. Once, as we drew near Damascus, I saw him say his prayers on the camel.

Our meal over, we quickly mounted our camels, and in ten minutes we had topped the sandhill that obstructed our view before sunset. In front of us, to left and right of our path, I saw the twinkling fires of a great Bedouin encampment. Then I understood the

old man's strategy, the reason of all his haste, and the unusual fervour of his devotions. Had we reached this point half an hour before we would have been visible to the whole camp; had we reached it ten minutes later we must have gone without our meal, for unless Moussa had extinguished the fire exactly when he did, it would have been a beacon to betray our presence to every Bedouin for miles round. Moussa checked his camel; pointed to the camp-fires; held his hand over his mouth, intimating to me to keep quiet; then we threaded the camp. It was an anxious hour. We could hear the voices of the Bedouin distinctly as they laughed and sang. Sometimes we seemed to be but a stone's-throw from their fires. The stillness of our immediate neighbourhood was appalling. I thought the low swish-swash of the water-bags and the soft padded footfall of the camels, so noiseless by day, must betray us. Every now and then my beast dislodged a loose stone; the Bedouin may have heard it and thought it the movement of one of their fellows. My chief anxiety was lest we should run up against a tent that was not marked by a fire, and for once I was thank-

ful for that icy wind from Lebanon which made a cheerful blaze a necessity. Jolly dogs, how I envied them! They might make a blaze to outshine Ushant and St Catherine's, and laugh and talk and sing till morning,—they had no toll to pay,—while I, a miserable infidel *feringhi*, shivered under my false turban and dared not strike a match to light my pipe. Moussa would have denied me this luxury on all nights, but in this alone I was sometimes disobedient. After an hour or two's riding the last distant flicker of the fires died out behind us. For a time all danger was at an end, and we entered a country too bleak and barren even for Bedouin. It was here that Moussa said his prayers on the camel.

We only allowed ourselves six hours sleep, rising before sunrise and riding on well into the night; it was often after midnight when we stopped. There was no moon, and Moussa guided himself by the stars. For the last few hours of each day, what with fatigue and cold I was but half conscious, and it was only the chill icy wind from the snows of Lebanon that kept me awake and prevented me from falling from my camel to the ground. A broken limb

in the desert is little short of death. Herein the mariner is better off than the camel-driver, for the latter is wrecked if his beast breaks down, goes lame, or, as has sometimes happened, breaks from his tether; also he has the additional disadvantage of being in an equally bad case if any accident or sickness overtakes himself. But it was not the Bedouin or the danger of sickness from the unaccustomed fatigue against which my friends warned me so much as the effects of the intense cold. The morning we left Baghdad the ground was white with hoar-frost. In addition to two woollen vests, a flannel shirt, a thick waistcoat and Norfolk jacket, a heavy winter overcoat and scarf, I wore a large poshteen, and at night rolled myself up in blankets and a voluminous Persian quilt. Thus, with the help of a deep draught of cognac from my flask, I managed to get warm enough to fall asleep. The winter before a postman had died on the track of exposure and cold. Even in the daytime I found it necessary to keep on my overcoat. Luckily there was no snow.

Three days after threading the Bedouin camp we woke up in the morning and saw the mountains of Damascus with their faint

snow-rim in the west. It was then that Moussa broke into song. I did not understand his chant of victory; but here is the lilt of it, and perhaps something of its spirit:—

Dearest, awake, the desert calls.
Oh voyaging is victory!
Make haste, awake the Bedouin;
The West is veiled, a violet screen
Curtains the East with hands unseen.

Oh hasten, wake the brotherhood.
The fellah sleeps: lords, captains, we,—
Lords of the desert infinite
From Scham to Hilleh, Bers to Heit,
Captains to hold and harass it.

Behold our brother digs and delves
So passionless, so mirage-blind;
For heaven a roof; for freedom walls,
A house, a grave. The desert calls;
Leave fenced cities to such thralls.

III.

One cannot appreciate a comfortable bed until one has slept night after night in the open shivering in the cold starlight, or ill-protected from the rain, or feverish and

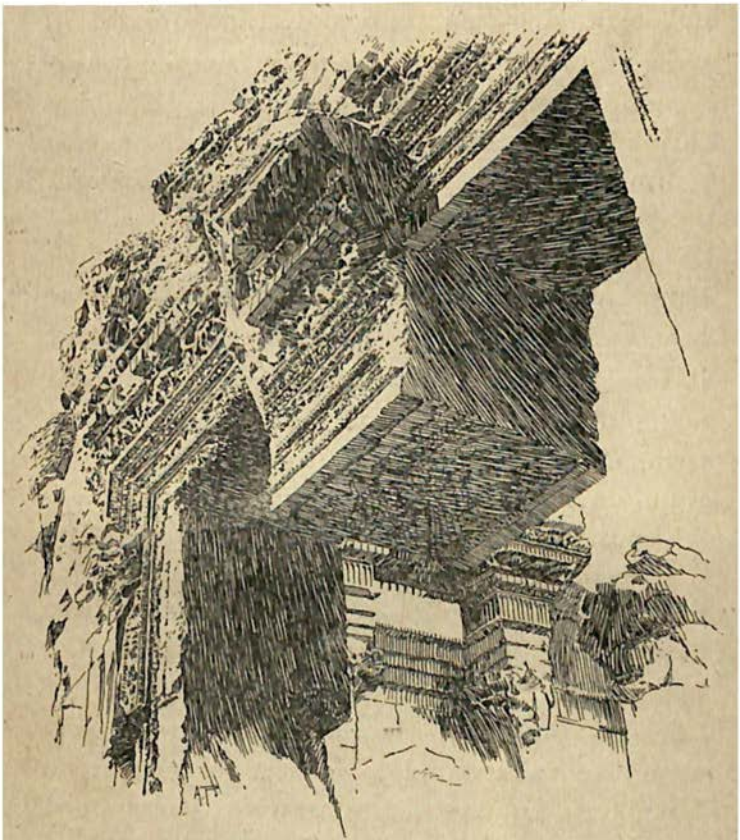
mosquito-bitten in some tropical jungle; just as a sensuous Turk can enjoy nothing but his dinner in Ramazan, or as a spoilt child can never know happiness until he begins to appreciate immunity from pain. Call the camel happy who sinks on his straw bed after being flogged ten days and nights over the waterless desert, and the rider happy who need ply the whip no more. Yet, when one looks back on those desert rides, one seems to have relished the cold and fatigue and the sleeping under the stars. And the illusion fastens on us even before we wake in civilisation and enjoy that first morning reverie, looking out of the window into the quiet courtyard with its fountains and orange-trees and cypresses.

In Damascus, the birthplace of Eliezer, the city founded by Uz, I found civilisation,—hotels, trains, tourists; also dragomans, guide-books, and sights to see, than which I can imagine nothing more boring or more melancholy. There were historic houses where St Paul lived, and Judas and Ananias,—this, no doubt, on his own testimony,—visited by hundreds of Americans and missionaries in the course of the year; also "the street that is

called Straight,"—it is not really straight, only called so (Καλουμένη), as some wag remarked long ago; also the tomb of Fatima's lover, at which the pious Mussulman in passing casts a stone. Moralisers should note that the Christian does not throw stones at the house of Judas. Then there are the mosques and the marble palaces of the wealthy Jews, and the Prophet's tree with its hanging English street lamp, and the bazaars, and the horse and donkey markets, and the Government stables filled with Arabs ready to be shipped for our cavalry in Egypt,—altogether a strange medley of Christian, Hebrew, and Muhammadan.

The great mosque stands on the site of the temple of Rimmon, which was demolished for the shrine of Jupiter, which in its turn gave place to the Church of John the Baptist, the uppermost layer of the stratified relics of faith upon which the Muhammadan superstructure is built. For a hundred years the bloody treacherous Ommeyades worshipped here, and afterwards our own crusaders hurled themselves against the mosque when we cared enough for spiritual things to fight for them.

The bazaars are not too overrun with globe-trotters, so that excellent work may be had



The Temple of Jupiter.

at low prices. For the first day or two a dragoman is indispensable. He will introduce

you to the workshops, where you may see little Syrian boys deftly stamping brasswork, and executing marvellous designs in walnut and mother-of-pearl; little Jewish girls carving and enamelling and turning, and looking very pretty and healthy and happy. On the ground floor are the warehouses, fitted with the finished work ready to be shipped off to the markets of Paris and London. The Damascene arms and silk stuff tempt one to buy. One can almost persuade oneself that it would be economical to collect the wedding presents of a lifetime and take them home in trunks. I can recommend any honeymooning couple, with time and money to spare, if they wish to furnish their houses more beautifully and inexpensively than their neighbours, to make for Damascus,—a short week now from London by the *Oriental Express*."

The gardens of the city were bare, and the streams ran icy cold. I wandered in the denuded walks, and pieced together out of them the summer bowers where the people gossip and drink coffee all the evening and half the night, but the only note of colour was the foxy brown of the osiers and the young twigs of lopped willows.

To my mind the most romantic corner of the old city is the starting-place of the Mecca caravan, where the *mahmil*, or royal canopy of green silk, with the curtain for the Kaaba, is laid upon the favoured camel. I should like to have been there to see the beast blessed and presented with his consecrated sugar ball. No doubt the old custom will soon die out. We live in the days of the *Dajjal*, foretold by the Prophet, in which engines and material comforts are held of more account than the shelter of the faith. Already the railway stretches to Medina, and Muhammad's tomb is lit by electric light. The camel will soon appear an anachronism to the progressive Turk, if it is not superannuated already, and the Sultan's splendid gift will recline on the cushions of a plush-lined, brass-studded Pullman car.

I did not visit all the lions of the place, having, like Mr Michael Angelo Titmarsh, a rooted objection to that fatal duty which superstition entails upon a man of visiting the chief lions of the city in which he may happen to be. "You must go through with the ceremony," says Mr Titmarsh, "however much you may sigh to avoid it, and however

much you know the lions in one capital roar very much like the lions in another." But I did not see the necessity. The travelling instinct and the sight-seeing instinct are poles apart. And truly one can get a better insight into the real character of a place by wandering about the bazaars, noticing the street scenes, listening to the talk, and trying to imagine the strange histories of these men, their jealousies, ambitions, and intrigues; by climbing the hill at sunset that overlooks the city and looking down on the mosques and minarets, and the green olive gardens, and all the busy humming life of the streets, uninterrupted by the broken Baedeker of any obsequious Syrian dragoman.

All the walls and façades of Damascus were painted with vivid stripes of red, white, and black, in honour of a distinguished tourist who had lately shed the light of his illustrious presence on the oldest city in the world. Not even the house of Ananias was spared; nor the house where St Paul was let down in a basket, if there is any faith in dragomans; nor the house of Judas, who must have turned in purgatory at this new breath of notoriety. Even on the walls of

Baalbec, the most splendid monument of his imperial prototypes, there was engraved an inscription in white marble, of which I remember the words—"*Imperator Germanorum visitavit.*"

While at Damascus a fit of consuming homesickness seized me, for when one has been long abroad the thought of England tugs at one until all foreign lions become as mice compared to those dear stolid ones of Trafalgar Square. I had no longer any hankering for Smyrna and Athens and Constantinople and Vienna,—all of which cities I had fondly dreamed of visiting; for the thought of home drew me like a magnet, and I would not have delayed my arrival by an hour for anything. Only there was Baalbec,—after reading 'Eothen' I could not pass that by. I took the train—also painted black and white and red—for Beirut, and stopped a night there on the way. I got a good guide, paid him handsomely not to accompany me and to see that no cadging loafer approached. Thus for once in my life I visited a lion in peace. It roared hugely, and inspired me with awe and wonder—everything but speech.

The little mountain train climbed over

Lebanon, winding slowly through the snow; then dipping behind a ledge of rock, stopped, as though in admiration. For there beneath us sparkled the blue dancing waves of the Mediterranean, and the warm, clear, vivid, gem-like little port of Beirut nestled by the beach. How different were the blue waves to the dirty yellow Persian Gulf, the last bit of ocean I had set eyes on. And Xenophon cried, "Thalatta! Thalatta!" In that simple phrase the soldier-historian expressed centuries ago the very acme of home-sickness, and of all the Greek that was drubbed into me at school I remember little else. At the station I took a carriage, drove straight to the shipping agents, and sailed the next morning by the first vessel that left the port. At my *pension* that evening I was waited on by a maid-servant. She was little more than four feet high, and had no figure or face to speak of; yet she represented homeliness, and was to me the first symbol of the West.

My ship was a *messageries maritimes* bound for Marseilles, and calling at Jaffa, Port Said, and Alexandria. At Jaffa I drove among the orange gardens, and felt I ought to be more sorry I could not stay long enough to visit

Jerusalem, only a few hours distant by train. At Port Said I read the English newspapers, the first time for two months, and found that things were going on very much the same as ever: certain people had married, or died, or given birth. At Alexandria I sat under a tree in the Plaza, and killed time and impatience with the latest novel of Mr Conrad. In less than a week I was crossing the Channel to Dover, with a comfortable conviction that life is best taken sandwich fashion with dear old England for the bread. It was a cold starlight night in early February. As we sped through Kent the same moon was shining out boldly that Moussa and I had watched, a tiny crescent, setting over anti-Lebanon, three nights after we threaded the camp of the Bedouin. I was at Charing Cross that morning before six, and after a steaming bath in the hotel set out to explore the streets. No restaurants were open, and my friends lay sleeping in their beds in different quarters of the city, unconscious of my arrival. I sought Covent Garden, resisted an almost irresistible impulse to slap a genial, blue-coated bobby on the back, and was moved to the wildest delight at the sight of

the splendid London dray-horses—huge, impossible Brobdingnagian beasts—which I saw as in a dream. Then I drifted into the crowd, that dear white English crowd, which is the lost heritage of every exile over seas.

LONDON.

I WAS killing an hour in Soho when I ran into Cross, hot-foot from the East. We met in a dingy passage leading out of Newton Court, where remnants of second-hand furniture, ill-protected from the rain by awnings, were set half across the pavement to tempt poor souls who meditated marriage and housekeeping on twenty or thirty shillings a-week. The squalid front of Newton Court, a mountain of ugly tenements, intersected by iron staircases and girded at every storey by iron banister rails, shadowed the passage uncompromisingly and spelt gloom. The air and dinginess were oppressive, and one felt a great pity for the denizens of the place. A loiterer was eyeing a dilapidated bath, black and rusty with its cracked paint, a bait for some rich eccentric. Our eyes met in a chipped mirror with grotesque distortions, and he turned uneasily

to examine other things which he seemed anxious to carry over the way,—shabby, worm-eaten chests of drawers, shredded horse-hair chairs, and an ottoman which looked as if it had once been garish, and was now covered with pathetic remnants of books marked 2d. each, and so detached from all human interest that one felt they could only be bought for ostentation. The rain trickled through the awning, and I was just thinking of the East, particularly a corner of it which seemed to me the most perfect antithesis to all this, when I ran into Cross, the very man with whom I had shared this little antithetical paradise not so many months before.

It was the old furniture, the symbol of all our fictitious standards and needs, that set me thinking of India. From pitying people who have made such lumber as necessary to themselves as a roof over their heads, one's thoughts would naturally turn to folk who often need no roof at all, to a land of strong sunshine and clean air. For the drabness of London, far more than one realises, may be charged to its sunlessness, — the drabness alike of its facts and its ideals. Everywhere that the sun shines, and one

may count on its shining through the greater part of the year, there will be found a larger measure of peace, fewer needs, a simpler standard of living. And this is so true that it might almost be said that the aggregate peace of mind of any people could be gauged by the number of months or weeks in the year it is possible for them to lie down and go to sleep in the open air. Apply the test to London and Ganjam. There the man who has failed, to take the case of the abject poor, can lie down anywhere in the sun or shade and rest: no policeman will disturb him, and he can build himself a shelter if he needs it. The poor are fed without contempt, so long as there is no famine and there is enough to go round. In London poverty is made hideous by the fear of having nowhere to sleep, of being left out in the street, on the pavement, in the gutter, in the cold and the wet; by the horror of not being respectable, of not having (more than not being) this or that. Here, and there too, men are trying to push one another off the plank. But here the game is crueller, as the plank spans an abyss. The death of a starved ryot in a famine district must be euthanasia compared

with being submerged in London. The man who sees this will be a sun-worshipper. Gloom and cold and fog and fighting on a plank have strengthened us, but they have made us sad, vulgar, and shabby-genteel.

The unsophisticated Hindu entering London would be bewildered by the number of its totems and fetishes, and the elaborate decencies for which so many people live unnatural and indecent lives, stifling honest instincts or diverting them into unwholesome channels for the sake of stiff collars and a meaningless uniformity of apparel. He would find nothing in London as God made it; the second-hand furniture shop, the plush and varnish of Suburbia, would fill him with uneasiness. I can imagine him routed by Newton Court, distressed in a stupid uninquiring way, as a bird that has lit on a grimy collier in its passage South. Pedda Logidi, to give his home a name, would gleam at the end of a vista intolerably remote. A clean, sunlit courtyard and a whitewashed room; green leaves for table service; for clothes, a shift to wind round him; for his penates, nothing but a mat or two, a charpoy, and a few burnished vessels, scrupulously clean; for

ornament, whatever mystic designs he might choose to trace in chalk on the lintel or threshold, and a garland of mango-leaves hung over the door for luck. A place to sleep soundly in and wake every morning to the music of rustling palm-leaves bowing rhythmically in harmony with the faint hum of birds and insects and the tinkling bells of the cattle going out to pasture.

I was seeing this eye to eye with him, when there came a swinging step behind, then a violent blow on my shoulder, and I turned to find my friend standing there to attention with a certain glow in his eyes, but speechless with the impulse of the race to let an encounter explain itself with as little help as possible.

"Isn't this fine?" were his first words.

"Isn't what fine?"

"Why, this," he said, swinging his stick round to indicate the derelict furniture, the chipped mirror, the dismal fruit-stall, the web of suspended telephone wire, and the uncompromising front of Newton Court.

"I was thinking of Pedda Logidi," I said.

"Oh yes, Pedda Logidi! But come along; I want to soak in this."

He linked his arm in mine and swung into Gerrard Street, treading air. I let him rave, for I knew how it all struck him. He still saw London as we saw it in the wilderness, as most exiles do in distant parts of the earth, thinking of it as the home of romance, the epitome of the human race, a city prolific in adventure. All this which seemed to me so grimy and squalid and repulsive was to him a facet merely of a dearly-recovered possession; it stood for his dreams of the place in far lands, and he was turning the crystal dotingly. Now it was Soho. To-night it would be the West End. In the meantime everything was good, even the poisonous prints and drinks and smokes displayed in the shop windows. He lingered enchanted in a muggy current of air that oozed from a French restaurant, carrying the savour of onions and *pot au feu* across the pavement. He found joy in the modest assurance of a group of French laundresses seen through a basement window ironing linen, the sleeves of their grey print dresses turned up at the elbow. "Pardah Nashin" was on his lips contemptuously as we pulled up in Soho Square.

Here weeping plane-trees were scattering

their sparse leaves. Their trunks, blotched and scored like dominoes where the gritty bark had fallen, took on a spectral white from the reflections of the electric light, which quivered on the railings, the dripping pavement, and the grey behind everything. A fog was creeping up, so that the gaunt houses which flanked the garden on all sides were made barely discernible by dim lights penetrating curtains and drawn blinds. Not a hundred yards off rose and fell the insistent roar of Oxford Street, while the only immediate sign of life at our feet was a cat dejectedly seeking a dry place.

And this was the London we had personified in the stillness of forests,—a city impersonal, but remembering, appreciative even sometimes, as when one dreams of the echo of one's feet on her pavements as the sound of a caress. Did Cross, I wondered, now that he had come back, his work done, expect to find a ripple on her face, and in the deeps somewhere a pebble to mark an endeavour? I had laughed at him once for falling into dreams over a scrap of tin or some civilised relic, valued because it must have passed by the banks of the Thames, just as a lover is moved to reverie

over a relic of his mistress. But there was the picture,—cranes and barges and hurrying feet over Hungerford Bridge.

It was always one of our amusements to visualise London. I remember how, in the wilds, a book had twice the charm if the scene were laid there; how, when we read that Major Pendennis walked down Jermyn Street, we remembered the times we had walked down Jermyn Street ourselves, and thought of the times we would walk down Jermyn Street again, if the good God were compassionate. I remember Cross sitting up half the night over a trashy novel because the scene was laid in Holland Park, and eagerly turning the pages in the hope that a policeman would turn down some lane that he knew, or a hansom pull up in a familiar street. And in Europe he could not have read beyond the first chapter.

And here he was, come back into it all with the old freshness. He had left a land of sunshine, greenery, and visible content, a semi-outdoor life, horses which the West denied him,—for in London he could not afford a hack,—and an endless belt of wood and hill and marsh-land which might have been his own preserve, and was seldom disturbed save

by the crack of his own gun. And what, you may well ask, had London to offer in exchange for all this? Whatever it might be, he was well content. His ideal had not yet failed him. Standing there in Soho Square, I could piece it together more or less from tags of camp talk heard and remembered in the Maliahs. For the zest of the man made his words oddly memorable. He was one of those spontaneous souls whose thoughts run naturally into words, who seem to have no thought of—certainly no affectation of—reserve, and happily no need of it.

First in his perspective, I think, gleamed that curve of lights by the embankment from Charing Cross to Waterloo Bridge, and the gardens behind, which is Adelphi Terrace, with the windows looking out over the Thames, where hobnob the votaries of the Muses; and this, he thought, was the finest view in the world. Near by, in eddies off the Strand and Fleet Street, are the dens of men who write, old friends who still dream in familiar rooms, where walls and shelves dimly indicate their visions. And beyond, only a mile or two to north and west, in squares and streets and crescents, are the dozen or more

houses where one is made welcome. Here are women like none else in the world, beautiful every one of them in some respect or other, buoyant and easy of gait, tall, fair, with clear, quiet eyes and voices rich as the tones of a bell. He could not speak of London without rhapsody!

What a home-coming his must have been! Suez passed, one can imagine the first contact with Europe in the white crowds of Marseilles and Paris. These are good, but unsatisfying, landmarks on the path. Then the chalk cliffs of Dover, where is real earth, nurse of the whitest men on earth—soil, one feels, of which a grain must have more virtue than tons of Asiatic rubble. Here John of Gaunt's words, freshly remembered, warm the blood like wine, as one steps ashore and leaves the waters

> "as a moat defensive to a house,
> Against the envy of less happier lands."

Charing Cross receives one, grim, friendly, and demoniac, with its shrill insistent traffic. Then out into the streets, to drift aimlessly, ecstatically in the crowd.

II.

I left London for a month, and came back to find Cross disconsolate. Take a man from Gilgit or Kentung, plant him in the Strand, and he will feel just as young as the day he went away. And every time he revisits London the old illusions will come back and stay with him for at least ten days, just as if everything had stood still in the interval of his absence, ready for him to come home and pick up the threads.

But the new zest is short-lived. It may be we have not the buoyancy we had, though we keep youth longer than stay-at-home folk, whom we find disproportionately aged and disciplined. Cross was disappointed. Old friends, of course, had not changed, but others with whom he used to be fairly intimate quite failed in their well-meant efforts to appear cordial. A. was smothered in the defensive wrappings of etiquette; B. submerged in a commonplace marriage; C. absorbed in the routine of business. Their coldness was quite unconscious; and Cross laid the blame, perhaps unjustly, on an office or an unimaginative wife, while, as

a matter of fact, A., B., and C. had probably obeyed the laws of civilisation, which overlook wild men of the woods, and leave them with the instincts of a schoolboy or a savage.

Speaking ingenuously as one of these, with whom ten years more or less of the open air must have made him kin,—a kinship which ten days of London confirmed,—my friend was wondering if A., B., and C. ever realise how depressing they and their city are to men from the frontiers. It was nearly ten years since Cross had last set foot in London, and he had returned to find things very much changed. Perhaps the change was in himself. A life under broad skies may have reduced him to paganism. Anyhow, he was disappointed in London. I do not record this because I think London will be concerned at his criticisms, but because there must be many Londoners who would like to know how they appear to simpler folk. I have always found that evolved people are much more interested in savages than savages are in evolution. Cross must be wrong, of course. I am not too dull to recognise this, and to see that in other respects, as, for instance, when I agree with Cross, my vision must be defective.

Things must appear to him inverted, like the distortions one has seen on the back of a spoon. His discontent must be due to devolution, and his impressions primitive enough to make them psychologically interesting. They may not be new; they are certainly more intuitive than derived. But they are spontaneous, the views of a man of action who has done good work quietly; a man who has had his own definite plot to attend to, and knows exactly what he has done or failed to do for England.

Men of his type often find London vaguely distressing after the spaciousness of the East: it appears to them like a monster that is fed on human lives. They see the whole machine pulsing and throbbing and making earth hideous with its discordant din, and they know nothing of the springs and motives that keep the mechanism going. Destiny has been tender enough to leave them out of the mill. Yet they are the men who do the work. "Nothing is done in London," say the men from the Marches. "Whitehall, Pall Mall, Westminster? They occasionally put in an unintelligent spoke and thwart us with the best intentions."

Cross had already swept them away in a

flood of invective, when he turned again on the men in the street. We were watching the crowd from the security of a first-floor window, and wondering how any man could pass his days in it without becoming dehumanised. Every one looked so unhappy and anxious, as if they were living under a continual strain, which was very probably the case. A few loitered vacuously by the shop windows like seaweed drifting in a current; while others struggled east and west, pushing one another off the pavement in a jarring conflict of aims, each man trying to get more out of life than another, to deceive, undersell, or outwit him. And one knew that all this which one saw on the surface was being repeated underground in a warren of tunnels and tubes, and overhead in a network of wires,—the work of men restlessly striving to communicate with one another in their efforts to find some peculiar need of the organism which they can furnish for a price.

Across the pavement a bun-shop was disgorging its anæmic crowd. "You wouldn't believe," Cross was saying, "that only a century ago the stock these men are sprung from fought like Paladins for a sentiment. Look at

them now! Poor devils, what chance have they, bred in an atmosphere like this, with a policeman round the corner? Naturally they look on sudden death as phenomenal. Yet nine out of ten of the men you see in the street believe that, being products of progress, their servitude is more dignified than that of their forebears in the days of feudalism. 'Dark ages,' they call them; and these days, when usurers and sweaters have ousted the military overlord, they term 'enlightened.' How many men do you think in that crowd can call their soul their own? They are all bought and sold, driven and hurried, dependent on caprice. London has become the biggest slave-market in the world; there is an epic of misery in the wake of every self-made capitalist."

"But why gird at London?" I said. "The weakest must go under. It is a natural law that holds everywhere."

"Yes, but it is the quality that makes for fitness that I quarrel with. The standards of strength and weakness change, and the modern standard is the presence or absence of the shopkeeper's instinct of gain, with or without honour. The battle goes to the man with the greatest vitality and the least scruples, to men

who never miss a weak spot or hesitate to strike at it. Every generous instinct must be a flaw in their armour; every human interest must weigh them down. Look at that man there with the loose green overcoat. You can see he has pawned the coat underneath it, and very likely his shirt. He is drifting in the crowd in the hope that something may turn up; but he feels that his foothold is slipping, and the threads have slipped from his fingers. I can imagine him crushed by the nightmare of London's indifference until he would rather fall into the hands of cannibals than go under in that crowd.

"Even those who emerge and gain a foothold seem to move in continual fear for their security, and begin to barricade themselves against encroachment. I ran up against some earthworks of the kind this morning in a mansion off Fleet Street. The buildings filled half a street. On the ground floor was a smell of new mahogany and brass; pale and stiff young men sat at desks copying and pasting slips into a book; liveried messenger-boys were running in and out; a lift was ascending and descending with awful solemnity; and a whir of distant machinery came from somewhere

underground. How differently, I thought, must the sound of those engines strike the permanent staff and the outside applicant for work.

"I wanted to find an old friend, now the editor of 'The Weekly ——'" (Cross mentioned a successful journal), "and drag him off to lunch. The offices of 'The Weekly ——,' I was told, were on the first floor. 'Turn to the right when you get up the stairs,' a porter told me, 'then the first turning to the left.' A hand on the passage wall confirmed these directions, and I found three doors, marked 'Private,' 'Manager, "Weekly ——,"' 'Editor, "Weekly ——."' I opened one, and was confronted by two strangers, who stood stiffly and glared resentment, as if expecting an attack. 'Smith not in, I suppose.' No answer neither spoke. I might have been a conspirator detected in a crime. A door was flung open on the other side of the passage, and an excited attendant ran in.

"'Who is it you want to see, sir? Mr Smith? I will inquire, sir. Will you remain in the passage?'

"He dived through the door marked 'Private,' and reappeared.

"'Mr Smith is out, sir. Will you leave a message? I am afraid it is against the regulations to give a gentleman's address.'

"These were the men who are winning," Cross explained. "It was necessary to secure themselves against invasion. The attendant ought to have been in the passage. I had broken through the fortifications, and was naturally taken for an enemy. Perhaps they scented a manuscript, a prospectus, or an application. The precautions were sane enough, but Smith missed a good lunch.

"I don't know why, but those desks and chairs and defensive doors reminded me of old Wali Muhammad's story of going home to his valley in the Khuzrogi country through the Zakka Khel. When he put in for leave he used to invent a false route, because he was afraid that Firoz of his own company would follow him up and put an end to the tribal blood-feud by sniping him on the border. It was not good form to settle these things in the regiment. So Wali Muhammad used to skulk in the maize-fields and travel only at night. So long as he was in the Zakka Khel country he existed only on sufferance, like most of the men you see here in the

street; but he always had the chance of doing a little sniping on his own account, and that is where the parallel ends. His rifle symbolised the primitive way of holding on to life and securing his own, and it seemed to me a healthier and happier one than this London skirmishing. All the way down the steps, as I passed doors behind which disciplined and bun-fed clerks were transferring accounts from a day-book into a ledger, scheming how not to lose their situation, with the only idea, it seemed, of absorbing one day at the desk that they might endure countless more, I was thinking of the strong sunshine of Kila Sher Sang, the rare little green patches of terraced maize-fields, and the irrepressible camel-thorn scrub thrusting its roots into the rock.

"Instead of lunching with Smith I came here and ran into you, so perhaps it is as well. But I am sorrier than ever for the men who have to climb stairs in search of work. The encounter was jarring enough as it was, but it would have been detestable if I had wanted anything from these 'Weekly ——' men. Their air of looking round for a policeman brought home to me the tragedy

of unemployment more forcibly than anything I can remember: it made me understand that money means very much more to the unemployed than mere food and clothes, though these are hard enough to come by.

"Why, I often wonder, don't the submerged, when they have nothing to lose, give themselves over to organised loot. They seem, if anything, to respect their conquerors. The Napoleon who emerges from the crowd he has sweated and over-reached comes in for just as much awe as if he had won his way by the sword. It is an odd characteristic this of the London crowd, a kind of chivalry or Christian altruism, that makes the partially or totally submerged derive pleasure from the mere contemplation of success even where there is no hope of contact with it. A titled millionaire enters a barber's shop, and an assistant on a pound a-week and tips is set to shave him. You would think the young man would be glad of the opportunity to cut the grandee's throat. Not a bit of it. He is proud to touch him, and elated at his good fortune for the rest of the morning. 'That, sir,' a young barber said to me, 'is Captain Asterisk,—the third captain that 'as been in

'ere this morning. He belongs to the Duke of Asterisk's family. Perhaps you may 'ave met him on a military campaign?'"

I began to be glad that Cross had fallen foul of the editors. It gave him an impetus. I felt as if the Khyber was standing in judgment over Fleet Street.

"It is a truly British hair-shirt instinct," he went on,—I cannot convey his extraordinary gift of invective, though I recollect enough of what he said to be conscious that my version of it all is merely a paltering imitation,—"and it filters through all classes. Among the more well-to-do one comes across a type with whom open admiration gives place to the make-believe, in which men hover round the fold of the elect, repeat second-hand gossip about them, reckon on third cousinships by marriage, and affect to regard a casual spider's thread connection as a permanent bridging of the gulf. They like to think they have come out top in the *mêlée* though they have only stuck half-way, and this, I fancy, is the only imaginative side you will find in the average middle-class Cockney.

"Even among the elect there are degrees,

until the point is reached where the hair-shirt instinct vanishes. The only difference, then, is that the degrees are recognised as merely artificial decorations on a foundation of equality. Yet here, too, in the fold you will find rings, and an honest revolt against exclusion even where inclusion would be distasteful. There is the eminent man's wife, who for impressment is not above a shift to let you know she was born in Mayfair, lest you should think she could only soar there on her husband's pinions. Editors who know us in the aggregate better than we know ourselves are quick to detect the weakness, and profit by an open or insidious appeal to it.

"And now that the standard of popular taste is guided and reflected by the half-penny press, it is not difficult to delineate the Londoner in aggregate. Every issue of a popular journal must be a sort of glorified edition of his tastes and interests, prejudices and ideals, boiled down and served up in essence, the product representing the point of view of the ordinary man, or rather the point of view he would like to have if he had any at all. And if this hideous aggre-

gate man, the personification of the popular taste, ceased to be a composite picture of a dozen different kinds of vulgarity, the newspaper would cease to exist.

"One cannot help admiring the man who can look into that grim physiognomy,—a Medusa's head to the sensitive,—read the vulgar inwardness of it, and reproduce it every day, always with the same radiant smirk of self-sufficiency. For, take it which way you will, the monster has only two grimaces, either combative and vicariously intrepid as it leaps and shrieks and mafficks on the safe side of the ropes, or feebly and hysterically subversive as it indulges in a riot of futile declamation and yells its aggressive sermon of meekness. Surely it is an achievement in candour for men who must have some inkling of what is beautiful to present Demos with such an exact portrait of himself, so that Demos rising every morning from his bed may hug his own image—shake hands with himself, so to speak—with a semi-bibulous content, and go to his desk or counter with the complacency that only wine or worth inspire.

"Take the headlines for the features,—to preserve the metaphor,—the pervading senti-

mentality in Jingo and Radical alike for the set expression of the face, and you will be struck more than anything else by the amazing lack of proportion in the lineaments. 'Duke's son baptised,' 'Lord Blank's daughter jilted,' 'Admiral kicks off,' are human little touches that tell their own story, and coming from men who know what counts, show an admirable suppression of the salient.

"Perhaps it is as well that these artists are content to produce the same picture every day, and do not hope to exercise a formative influence on the people. For Demos, if he is to be saved, has more chance of working his own salvation."

Cross leaned out of the window. Outside in the street the traffic was locked, and the sudden lull and cessation of wheels seemed to bring him to a standstill. An enormous hearse, with its following of mourning-coaches, was causing a block. The black plumes, the white everlastings, the over-caparisoned horses, the podgy and histrionic mutes, the hideous parade of the old bourgeois conception of woe that makes death more terrible than pathetic, left him almost without words.

"Look at that," he moaned, raising his

shoulders and thrusting his hands into his pockets with a pressure which relieved him of saying that our last appearance is the most unnatural of all—that the manner of it crystallises the substance of our ideals, and is the last triumph of sunlessness.

Cross called a waiter and lit one of his pungent Burma cigars. We drank, but we were sunk in gloom.

Perhaps in lonely parts of the earth our illusions will come back to us, and London will appeal to us again, as we think only of its pleasant back-waters, and forget the ugliness of the main stream.

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The Daily Telegraph.—"A picturesque, stirring, and spirited narrative."

The Daily News.—"For Mr Candler's book we have nothing but praise."

The Daily Mail.—"We do not see how Mr Candler can escape a place among the historians."

The Daily Graphic.—"Sure of a hearty welcome."

The Daily Express.—"Mr Edmund Candler's 'Unveiling of Lhasa' is at once a defence and an admirably interesting account of the recent Tibet Mission. It is written with wide knowledge and great insight."

The Westminster Gazette.—"The everyday incidents and accidents make the real romance of the enterprise. They are set forth in Mr Candler's account with a vividness and charm which make the whole volume delightful reading."

The Pall Mall Gazette.—"A remarkably vivid record."

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